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# **THE SIMPLE CASE FOR SOCIALISM**

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# THE SIMPLE CASE FOR SOCIALISM

by

G. D. H. COLE

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## NOTE

This is *not* another book about Socialist policy, or next Labour Government, or anything of that sort. Nor is it an economic treatise, nor again a *Utopia*. It is a personal statement, by one who has been a Socialist from boyhood, of the reasons for his faith. It discusses, mainly, not how to get Socialism, but why to want it, and what wanting involves. It is therefore far more about ends than means. save where, as in the chapter on Nationalism and War, the question of means is so presently intrusive that it cannot be set aside. I wish to add that this chapter, which has been passed for press at a critical moment in the struggle of Abyssinia, does not profess either to deal with the circumstances of that struggle, or to cover the entire ground of international Socialist outlook. If it did, there would be much more said of imperialist rivalries as the cause of war under capitalism. But of that aspect of the matter, as many others, I have written elsewhere.

G. D. H

*Hendon, September 1935.*

## CHAPTER I

# THE CASE FOR HUMAN HAPPINESS

I AM SETTING out in this book to put down the case for Socialism in the simplest possible terms. By Socialism I mean a form of society in which men and women are not divided into opposing economic classes, but live together under conditions of approximate social and economic equality, using in common the means that lie to their hands of promoting social welfare. Socialism, as I understand it, means four closely connected things—a human fellowship which denies and expels distinctions of class, a social system in which no one is so much richer or poorer than his neighbours as to be unable to mix with them on equal terms, the common ownership and use of all the vital instruments of production, and an obligation upon all citizens to serve one another according to their capacities in promoting the common well-being. Nothing is Socialism that does not embrace all these four things ; and, given the means of realising these four, nothing further is needed to make a Socialist society.

Or rather, only this is needed : that the Socialist society shall be able to live on terms of peace and amity with its neighbours, sharing with them in the promotion of the welfare and happiness of the whole world. It follows from this that Socialism is a gospel not for one people but for all. Socialist institutions may take many different forms in different countries according to the various cultures and

ways of living which the peoples of these countries have inherited from the past, and the variety of problems with which they are confronted here and now. These national differences are not evil but positively good ; and in each country Socialist institutions will have to be shaped in accordance with the national traditions of the people. But Socialism, in the broad sense which I am giving to the word, is a gospel and a necessity for all countries if they are to escape from the confusions of the present time into a saner and happier world. Socialism has its message for India and China and Africa no less than for Great Britain and Germany and the United States. Already in distant Russia the Socialist gospel is showing its adaptability to the needs and cultures of an immense variety of peoples at every stage of civilisation, from the nomadic horsemen of Mongolia to the advanced industrial populations of Leningrad and Moscow. Not that Russia is yet fully a Socialist country ; but admittedly the driving force behind the Russian experiment is the driving force of Socialism, and the new civilisation which is emerging out of Russia's barbarism and anarchy is clearly Socialist in its conception and attitude to the art of living.

Socialism established in one country and not in others is bound to be fragmentary and incomplete. It can, indeed, work miracles even within a single country, doing away with the extremes of poverty and riches, organising production for the common service of all the citizens, and creating an oasis of comradeship and collective endeavour in a desert of riot and confusion. But a Socialist country set in a ring of capitalist and imperialist States cannot hope to harvest the full fruits of Socialism. It must remain under the menace of war, compelled to waste its substance on armaments, to build up senseless barriers in the way of the open exchange of goods and services between country and country, suspect by its capitalist neighbours as a breeding

ground of revolution, and unable to join with them in building up a common culture based on a fundamental community of moral and social ideas. It is well worth while to endeavour to establish Socialism in a single country—for where shall a man seek first to achieve happiness if not at home?—but each national victory for Socialism can be regarded only as a step towards its establishment as a world-wide system of international fellowship.

For short, let us say that Socialism aims at a classless society in which the means to wealth will be communally controlled. It follows that Socialism must aim at democracy—that is, at assuring to every citizen a real and effective share in the government of his own country and of the world. Class equality and communal control mean nothing unless they mean democracy. Class equality is inconsistent with any sort of monopoly or dictatorship in the sphere of government; and communal control means control by all. No system can ensure that all men and all women will actually take an equal share in the work of government or exert an equal influence on public affairs. But this is not required. Democracy means not that all can be equal in this sense but that all men and women ought to have an equal chance of making their voices effectively heard according to their several capacities and interests. Under no system will every citizen ever wish to play an active part in the work of government; but under Socialism the aim will be to give every citizen the fullest possible chance of doing this and to encourage all who will to give their citizenship an active character.

The forms of government are many, and no one of them is adapted to all peoples. We in Great Britain, with our long parliamentary tradition behind us, may choose to give the government of our Socialist Republic a parliamentary form, though assuredly the British Parliament will have to undergo vast changes if it is to become a

truly democratic instrument of government in a Socialist society. The Russians may continue to prefer the Soviet to the Parliament, which has no roots in their national tradition. India, China, Africa, may strike out on yet other lines, devising new constitutional forms to suit their varying needs and traditions. It is indeed all to the good that they should do this ; for least of all people do Socialists, who set the highest value on human freedom and initiative, desire to impose a common pattern of government or organisation upon all the world.

We Socialists have in mind no rigid and inflexible Utopia in which, when it is once established, nothing will ever change. Far from it. Most of all social doctrines, Socialism rests on the belief that change is rooted in the nature of human living. Nature herself changes, and is changed faster and faster as men work upon natural forces with growing knowledge and with ripening skill. Institutions that were once useful and progressive reach the point at which they have served their turn. They cease to be aids to human advancement and become fetters upon the wrists of developing humanity. It is so with capitalism to-day ; and if we get Socialism, a day will come when the institutions which we establish for the administration of our Socialist society will themselves become obsolete. The coming of Socialism is not the end of human history, but the entry of humanity upon a new phase of social and cultural development. As long as humanity endures, new needs will continue to arise, calling for new responses from man's inventive talent and genius for the art of living. There is no "Utopia"—all that we can envisage is a next stage in human civilisation that will lift us up beyond the confusions of the present time.

Nor have Socialists a belief that Socialism, even to the extent to which its institutions can be foreseen, can spring suddenly into being full and complete. Whether the

advance towards it be rapid or slow, it is bound on all accounts to be by stages. Even where, as in Russia, Socialist control has been ushered in by revolution and preceded by an almost entire dissolution of the old order, Socialist institutions and ways of living cannot be built in a day. They have to be developed by stages, as enough people become ready to accept them and have strength and skill to build them up. Still more, if Socialism comes in, not through war and revolution as it did in Russia, but by peaceful conquest of power, as we hope it may in Great Britain, must its coming be by steps and stages so contrived as to keep the old order still working until the new institutions can be got ready to take its place. That conservation of the old order during the process of transition to the new is the hardest part of the task for those who seek to bring in Socialism by evolutionary means ; for it cannot be easy to keep the two systems working smoothly side by side. Indeed it cannot be done at all without strong government animating the whole system with a single conscious driving force in the direction of Socialism.

In the ranks of the Socialist movement there has been much controversy over the question of "gradualism" in Socialist policy ; and a good deal of this controversy has been beside the mark. If "gradualism" means only that Socialism cannot be brought in at a blow, then every sensible Socialist is a gradualist. If, however, it means that a society can slide by imperceptible gradations from a capitalist to a Socialist system, then "gradualism" is at fault ; for such a view misses out the vital importance of conscious human purpose, of the striving of millions of ordinary people towards the realisation of a new way of life, as the indispensable driving force towards a Socialist society. The coming of Socialism means for the whole people a change of mind and heart and not merely a change of machinery: It means a conscious will towards equality

and good fellowship that will stir the imaginations of the young and make men and women ready and eager to work and sacrifice for their ideal. Without this impulsion behind it, Socialism cannot be brought into existence ; and if, without this, we get "socialistic" changes in the machinery of society, we shall not therewith be getting Socialism. For Socialism is in its essence not mainly a new gospel of mechanical efficiency, but a way of life.

The danger of "gradualism" is that its exponents, conceiving the change as one of machinery and administration, that can be made by barely noticeable stages, without shock to the minds and habits of the people, will fail to arouse the enthusiasm and the strength that are needed for every great adventure. The force of habit and of tradition is very great : most of us live mainly under it for most of our lives. Now the habits and traditions of to-day are built on the requirements and adaptations of the past. So far from showing that human nature never changes, they are the crystallisation of past changes that were revolutionary in their day. Of these existing habits and traditions very many must be taken up almost without outward change into the way of living of the new social order ; for no social order can be made at all except on the foundations laid by the past. But habits once rooted in men outlive their use : traditions that were once fountains of lively development turn into frozen monuments to the past. Men cannot live without habits and traditions ; but they must be always making new ones if they are to live well.

Enthusiasm based on glowing belief that is a blend of intellect and emotion is the active force that brings new habits and traditions to birth. Intellect by itself makes no movements ; for intellect alone can never tell us what we *ought* to do. *Ought* is a matter of emotion and sentiment—not of sheer intellect alone. But men's emotions are stirred to great deeds not by little things but only by great hopes

and high beliefs. Unless men passionately want and value freedom, fellowship, class equality, comradeship in using and enjoying the great resources that lie ready to their hands, they will not succeed in achieving Socialism in any real sense. Collectivism of a sort they may achieve. For the technical forces of modern industrialism are driving them incessantly towards collective forms of administration. But collectivism is as compatible with the Slave State as with Socialism; and if we seek Socialism without assiduously preaching to mankind a new way of living together we are in grievous danger of making only the Slave State where bureaucrats will rule and the quality of life decay.

Our Socialism is, then, ardent, passionate, an affair of the heart as well as of the mind. We are in love with Socialism—with the vast new opportunities it offers for living together on terms of which no one of us will need to feel ashamed, of assuring to one and all, as far as in our knowledge lies, the means to health and strength and balanced growth of body and of mind, of doing away with all those twists and miseries of living that come of undernourishment, starvation of mental strength and hope, uneasiness at the sense of the crookedness of human dealing, thwarted personality and sheer disillusionment and loss of faith in life. That these ills can be conquered must be our faith, which is at bottom the simple belief that, given opportunity, most men will respond to an appeal to decent feeling and be ready to give as good as they get and often more.

That is what our "gradualists" are apt to miss, where our "extremists" get at least a glimpse of it. It is our tragedy that so often this fitful vision of the "extremists" runs to waste in hate. It is abundantly right to hate those things which are clear causes of needless human suffering—to hate them and to fight against them ceaselessly and with all our strength. It is right, even, to hate those who, with conscious malignancy, uphold these things and treat most

human beings as mere tools to serve their ends. But we must love as well as hate if we are to build as well as destroy ; for hate, not love, is the blind God who strikes amiss and slays his worshippers.

Put the case another way. If we are to build Socialism without an infinity of lost labour and needless setback and suffering, we shall need every ally who will work with us, even if many of these allies seem to us faint-hearted, half-hearted, or purblind. If we can persuade them to help us at all, maybe the task will grip them and give them greater faith, greater courage, and more vision. Whether or no, we cannot afford to do without their help ; for we shall need to call all hands to the work—all, that is, who are ready to help at all. And let us not be unmindful that from those we deem faint-hearted or half-hearted or purblind we too may have something to learn ; for though we Socialists are sure of our rightness in wanting Socialism, let us not delude ourselves that we are a hundred per cent right.

To my fellow-Socialists, then, I say, Be passionate, and yet be tolerant. Fight hard ; but hunt heresies as little as you may. Spare no effort of mind in working out the intellectual case for Socialism ; for clear thinking is assuredly a prime need for us who are set on creating a new order. But act also as men and women who have faith in human fellowship, who love their neighbours and extend their notion of neighbourhood to the whole interrelated, interdependent world. Our neighbour in China cannot and need not mean to us so much as our neighbour in the next street. *But he is still our neighbour.* In that sense Socialism knows no frontiers save the world's. But in another sense the Socialist no more wants to pull down the frontiers between Germany and France than between England and Scotland. Every Socialist feels the call to work for Socialism with special intensity within the narrower national group

to which he is particularly attached and whose traditions and habits of living he shares and understands. There is no inconsistency between cultural nationalism and international Socialism.

In the nation and in the world, the will to Socialism is based on a lively sense of wrongs crying for redress. Socialism is an ethical as well as an economic movement, or it has no meaning. If human suffering does not matter, whether it be our own or another's, if starvation of health or opportunity or happiness does not matter, the case for Socialism collapses. For then indeed it is a question of each man for himself and for the few he reckons his friends, and devil take the rest of mankind. Demonstrate as we may that Socialism offers the prospect of far higher efficiency than capitalism in the production and distribution of wealth, what of it unless we care that the social production of wealth should be maximised and its distribution be made to serve the greatest happiness of the greatest number? A smaller sum-total of wealth so distributed as to create a smaller total of human happiness may better serve our turn if we can grab more out of it for ourselves and our friends. Only when we have made the promotion of human welfare and happiness our end, recognising other men's claims as standing on an equality with our own and positively wanting these claims of others to be made into rights on a par with ours, have we the impulsion within us to create a Socialist society. No Materialist Conception of History, however true, and no scientific version of the Socialist gospel, can get us away from that universal "ought." Even if the forces of history are fighting for Socialism, why should we trouble to fight on their side unless we believe that Socialism is right?

I ask no one to call himself a Socialist unless he wants society to recognise other men's claims as no less valid than his own. Socialism is an imaginative belief that all

men, however unequal they may be in powers of mind and body or in capacity for service, are in a really significant sense *equal*, not merely before the law but one with another. They are equal as brothers and sisters are equal, the strong with the weak, the foolish with the wise—and the bad with the good, as far as men are good or bad in any final sense. Luck no social system can ever eliminate : there will be lucky ones and unlucky ones under Socialism as there are to-day. Differences of quality and attainment, too, will exist, however society is organised. There will be waste of genius, square pegs in round holes, backslidings and misfortunes due to passion and evil impulses under any social system. But we can at least greatly improve the chances of well-being and bring them nearer to equality between man and man. We can give everyone a much fairer start, a far more even chance of making the best of body and mind, and therewith a far better hope of escaping the doom of body or mind twisted awry by forces of nurture and environment. There is immense scope for increasing the sum of human happiness, even though, whatever we do, much unhappiness is bound to remain. The reason—the only valid reason—for being a Socialist is the desire, the impassioned will, to seek the greatest happiness and well-being of the greatest number.

At this point, both metaphysicians and politicians will begin to split hairs. The metaphysician will ask us for a definition of happiness, and the politician accuse us of seeking a "well-being" that is not what people do want but only what we Socialists think they ought to want. To the latter the answer is that, though it be true that the foundations of a man's happiness lie within himself, it is beyond all manner of doubt that physical health, security of mind and body, and reasonable comfort in the supply of material needs do make for happiness. Now is it doubtful that if, in politics, we aim chiefly at these we can be sure of

helping men towards making themselves happier in their several individual ways? We can add further that, if we can assure to all men these prerequisites of happiness, we can also feel confident that men, in their individual ways of living, will do far more than at present to promote the happiness one of another. There is no political antithesis between happiness and well-being; and material well-being, though it is not happiness, assuredly ranks high among means to happiness.

To the metaphysicians our answer is that for our practical and political purpose we need no definition of happiness beyond what common sense supplies. Happiness is a state of being to be defined by each man in his own way, to which the art of politics is to minister. If we are in no doubt that certain means do minister to happiness, and that happiness is a good, we can leave further definition to the philosophers and get on with the job that is ours.

Our job is to promote happiness by promoting, not for a few but for all, those means to happiness which are most capable of being maximised by collective action. The only arguments against Socialism that are worth considering are those in which it is alleged that Socialists are mistaken in believing that the collective control of social forces can increase the sum of human well-being. All other arguments turn out on analysis to be mere defences of vested "rights" and claims to superiority over other men. One cannot argue with a man who really holds that the rights of property are sacred irrespective of their social expediency, any more than it was possible to argue with the upholders of the Divine Right of Kings. It is possible only to demonstrate whether such principles lead by referring them to some standard which their upholders *ex hypothesi* reject. Men can and do believe disinterestedly in the Divine Right of Property, just as some men used to believe disinterestedly in the Divine Right of Kings. But, ninety-nine times out of a

hundred, behind the assertion of absolute right lies vested interest ; and vested interest has not seldom an uneasy conscience that may weaken or even paralyse its resistance when we expose it for what it is. If the upholders of absolute right stick to their guns, they cannot be driven out by argument. But as soon as they invoke expediency to buttress absolutism, we Socialists can have them on the hip. That is, we can do so if, on our chosen ground of human happiness, our case is sound. If Socialism will, as we believe, make the race of men stronger in mind and body, teach them not to abuse their strength, but to employ it as brothers in the common service, teach them to practise better the living arts of production and creation in every sphere, and enable them to dwell together on terms of amity and fellowship which class distinctions and gross disparities of wealth and breeding make impossible to-day, then truly our case is unanswerable.

We believe that Socialism can work these miracles—for miracles they are bound to seem amid the tangles and disillusionments of the present. But if we wish others to share our faith we must give good reasons for it. The reasons will not convert men to Socialism unless they share our ideals. But neither will our ideals gain converts unless we can adduce good reasons for our confidence. The Socialist case needs reasoned statement ; but in stating our reasons we must never lose sight of the ideal, the passion for human fellowship which alone can give them any cogency. Reasons are always reasons for something ; and that something involves an ideal. We are Socialists not *because* we think Socialism an historic necessity or a more efficient way than capitalism of organising mass production, but because we believe that Socialism will make for the greatest happiness and well-being of the greatest number, and because that above all else is what we want.

## CHAPTER II

### WHERE THE SHOE PINCHES

THE SOCIALIST has two main enemies to fight—poverty and enslavement. They are not the same ; but they are closely intertwined. A man who is poor is grossly handicapped, especially if he has a family dependent on him, in remaining master of his own soul. Often he is compelled to barter his freedom even for a scanty and precarious mess of pottage. For the sake of his wife and family, or even for his own sake, he dare not take risks by pitting his puny forces against powers obviously far greater than his own. Often he dare not risk losing his job in the search for a better, dare not claim the wage that he believes he is worth even from the standpoint of capitalist economics—indeed sometimes he dare not, for fear of getting the sack, even claim the minimum that the law ordains as his right. Often, again, he dare not speak out his mind freely for fear of incurring his employer's or foreman's displeasure, dare not stand forth as the spokesman of his fellows, dare not even combine with them in a trade union for mutual protection and help in time of trouble.

Moreover, in addition to the repressions of which he is directly conscious, the poor man has also yet more deadly repressions to face. The means of publicity and propaganda—the press, hoardings, theatre, cinema, wireless and a host of others—are chiefly under the control of the rich, and ceaselessly confront him with pictures of the world as the

rich would have it to be. The rich get one education and the poor another, that is usually cut short just at the most formative years of adolescence. The means of making pageants, of covering the drabness of every-day life with light and warmth and the appearance of jollity, are mainly in the hands of men who are set on preserving class distinctions and holding up the symbols of superiority for the adulation of the poor. The poor man, if he would work, must seek employment from his "betters": if he would play, he must look to them for the amusements and entertainments of his leisure. All this comes not of any peculiar devilry on the part of the rich, but as a matter of course, as the necessary consequence of great inequalities of wealth and income—of the monopoly of control and ownership, in the hands of the rich.

There is no need to overpaint the picture. This supremacy of the rich over the poor is far from complete, and in this country it has been growing steadily less complete for a long time. In one industry after another the workers, breaking down after many struggles and defeats the hostility of their employers, have won the right to combine, and trade unions have given poor men collectively a strength which individually they could never command.

But the recognition of this right is still by no means universal. In many of the newer industries, employers refuse to have any dealings with trade unions, or even to employ workers who presume to belong to them. Of late years, especially during the depression, which has inevitably sapped trade union power, this revolt of employers against collective bargaining seems to have grown stronger. Moreover the power even of the stronger trade unions has narrow limits. If matters come to an ultimate trial of strength, the employers can always in the last resort hold out the longer; for there is no fear of positive starvation to make them yield. The trade unions can gain concessions,

but only within limits set by the employers' readiness to make them rather than fight to the bitter end.

The trade union protects not only the workman's conditions of employment, but also his freedom of speech and action in his hours of leisure. It can stand out against victimisation as well as against low wages or overlong hours of labour. But in this too its power is limited, and ultimately the employer decides whom he will employ and whom he will not. For every worker who is openly victimised, a dozen "awkward customers" get the sack before others who are more pliable when staffs are being reduced on account of slackness of work. A man who stands up for his rights and tries to persuade his fellows to stand up for theirs is worth less to his employer than one who does unquestioningly what he is told. A strong trade union may avail to protect him : a weak one cannot. And, in face of the ups and downs of industry, very few trade unions are always strong.

It takes courage, save at times when labour is exceptionally scarce, to be an active trade unionist. It takes courage for an employed man to play an active part in local or national politics on the Socialist side. Of course there are employers—nowadays not a few—who recognise and respect the right of their employees to speak their minds and to act on behalf of their fellow-workers. But there are also many who do not, so that fear still serves powerfully to deter men from standing forth freely to act and speak according to their beliefs. Especially is this true in the countryside and in the newer industrial areas that have grown up outside the range of the old trade union tradition. To-day some employers deliberately put their factories in places which are beyond trade union influence, and struggle hard to hold trade unionism outside the factory gates. The trade unions, they allege, restrict industrial efficiency and interfere with "managerial functions."

They mean that trade unions do something to put the workmen on a bargaining equality with the representatives of massed capital.

As consumers, the workers and working-class housewives draw some feeling of strength from the powerful co-operative movement, which has been able to establish itself firmly despite the opposition of private traders. But the co-operative societies, working within the capitalist system and as the rivals of the capitalist *entrepreneurs*, have largely to accept the methods of their rivals. This is for the most part not their fault but the necessary consequence of the conditions under which they work. Co-operators have often had to choose between Socialist idealism and business success. Disciples of Owen the Socialist, they must nevertheless come to terms with their environment if they are to survive and prosper. They have been able to do far less for the "bottom dog" than for the relatively prosperous sections of wage-earners. For it is not remunerative to sell to the "bottom dog" except at high prices or by supplying shoddy goods.

The growth of a powerful working-class political party, based mainly on the trade unions but professing a Socialist gospel and admitting freely men and women of all classes who are ready to take the workers' side, has also helped greatly to protect the poor man's freedom. It has won him valuable concessions in the field of social legislation : it has given him more power to ventilate his grievances, both in Parliament and in the country : it has provided a rallying point for political consciousness and a place of fellowship wider than the trade union of a particular trade ; and it has definitely increased his sense of equality both in the exercise of his voting rights and over a far wider range. It has helped to provide him with a press, however inadequate to his needs, and with a platform. Above all, it has given him a nation-wide organisation wherein to work, and an

extended sphere of self-expression and public service. The existence of the Labour Party has helped women even more than men ; for whereas trade unionism is chiefly a masculine institution, in the political movement men and women work side by side on terms of full equality.

Nevertheless, when all these mitigations have been taken into account, it remains true that the poor man enjoys a vastly inferior freedom to the rich. He may be fortunate enough to find a good employer ; but he is still terribly at a bad one's mercy. He may be fortunate enough to find steady work ; but all too seldom will he be able to do work that he enjoys or has chosen freely according to his nature. Moreover, even if he has been lucky so far, the fear of unemployment still hangs over him unless his lot be cast in one of a very few favoured trades ; and advancing years threaten him with increasing insecurity and diminishing hope of an alternative job. The rich are happiest, not in being rich, but in being for the most part secure and for the most part being able to enjoy what work they do—which may be a great deal or a little or none at all. Security and a job one likes are boons beyond price. The vast majority of poor men have neither, and can have neither as long as the capitalist system endures.

If a man whom society regards as my equal maltreats me or is rude to me, I can answer him back in kind. I may not in fact do this ; but I can. It is essential to my self-respect that I should be in a position to answer back, and only my being so enables me to keep my temper and my sense of reasonableness without resentment. But a poor man cannot, without endangering his livelihood, answer back the rich man or the representative of rich men who gives him his orders. He has to be polite ; and that makes politeness infinitely harder. It causes the injury to rankle when between recognised equals it would usually be soon forgotten. No man ought to have such a hold over another as

to force upon him an outward submission that cannot reflect his inner feeling. No man ought to be in a position to force another to act or tell a lie.

The poor man's children must leave school and seek employment just when further education would bring to most of them the greatest profit and the greatest pleasure. Even if he makes sacrifices in order to keep them at school a little longer than the majority, they must justify his action by getting into jobs that will raise their social status whether they like these jobs or not. Secondary education becomes in many cases not a schooling in the art of life but a vocational training for clerical work. Moreover, the great majority, who leave school at the earliest age allowed by the law, are at a heavy disadvantage in seeking a vocation in life. Usually they must take what comes, without even the equipment for knowing which among the jobs available is likely to suit their bent. A little is done to afford vocational guidance ; but the age of starting work is too low for it to be of much effect. And, once started in a trade, the man who shifts out of it all too often condemns himself to a life-time of unskilled and underpaid labour. There will be no freedom in labour till work starts at a later age and workers can shift far more easily from job to job without sacrificing their prospects in life.

Thrust out into the world with an inadequate knowledge of its ways, and with little or no training in self-government or responsibility, such as our "public" schools and universities provide chiefly for the children of the richer classes, the poor man has to grope his way under immense handicaps. He is to be a citizen of no mean country, a voter at elections whom his representatives in Parliament and on the City or County Council profess their one desire to serve. But it is not easy for him to know how he wants them to serve him, or which of the rival candidates is likely to serve him best. They are all full of promises, which is by

no means to say that they seem to him full of promise. They flaunt before him big ideas to which he responds—the grandeur of country and empire, the hope of economic prosperity and social betterment, the glories of military prowess in the same breath as the blessings of peace. But practical politics is an affair of means as well as ends ; and intelligent voting is a matter both of sorting out intentions from declamations and of estimating the probable effects of concrete proposals. The plain man may be often a shrewd judge of character, though he is not immune from being bamboozled by much eloquence. But to vote for the better man gives, unfortunately, no assurance of voting for the better policy ; and in most matters to discern the better policy requires a skill beyond his reach.

This handicap is greatest when political activity skims most over the surface of secondary issues and gets down least to things that really matter. For if the fundamental issues can be laid bare, the plain man is as good a judge as any. But it is none too easy to disentangle the things that really matter from the rest. Politicians who mean the most opposite things can and often do make much the same noises and angle for much the same emotional responses, each side deliberately stealing the verbal thunder of its opponents. It needs a man of outstanding human quality—a George Lansbury or a Keir Hardie—to break down the barriers in the way of the plain man's grasp of the underlying issues. Men of that quality arise but rarely, and few constituencies or platforms can command their services. The rest of us have to struggle along, trying to speak our hearts out as well as our minds, but too often failing to give our hearers even an inkling of what we really and passionately want to say.

✓ That is the disappointment of democracy—the incitem-  
ment to despair of it to which we must refuse to yield. We  
must make men feel why we are Socialists and why they

must be Socialists too. If we are to achieve that, we must not bottle up our feelings, any more than we must refrain from using our brains. Men will not act with us unless they feel with us as well as think with us, and feel that we feel with them.

But we have no right to be disappointed with democracy—much less to yield to our disappointment; for democracy has not yet been tried. It cannot be tried in any real sense until it has been given an environment in which it can have free play. There can be no real political democracy without economic freedom to serve as a foundation for it. There can, indeed, be more or less democratic elements in a society that is undemocratic in its basic institutions. The democratic elements in a society can be of real value and can serve as instruments for the furtherance of freedom. They are the forerunners of democracy and point the way towards its achievement. But it is nonsense to speak of democracy as actually in being where men are divided into social classes differing grossly in wealth, opportunity, status, education—in short in all those things which make the difference between ruling and being ruled, between the classes for whose sake society is administered and the classes which are doomed to serve as means to other men's ends. Democracy may be in the making, but it is not yet made. In the modern world there is no real democracy short of Socialism.

Yet, be it agreed, things are on the whole a great deal better than they were. In Great Britain the standard of living has risen for the great majority of the people. The cultural gap between rich and poor has grown narrower, and a little has really been done to use taxation as an instrument for the redistribution of wealth. Though there remain in every great city slums that are a standing disgrace to civilisation—a damnation to every rich man who endures their continuance without revolt—be it agreed

that the absolute "bottom dogs" are fewer than they were, that there is less of starving in garrets and cellars, less of sheerly brutalising misery and destitution, less of a poverty which is so mean as to confront those who attempt to bring succour with an impassable barrier of physical aversion and despair. But instead of these Augean stables that we have done at least something to cleanse, we are in sore danger of creating new ones—derelict and desperate mining villages from which all hope has departed save the desolate comfort of the dole, oases of uselessness and destitution in a world advancing faster than ever before to fresh conquests over the powers of nature. Even in these areas of neglect and decay, misery in a purely physical sense stops short of the old extremes, for we no longer leave the workless to starve outright. But there is enough of callousness towards any suffering short of sheer physical starvation to make a grave indictment against the complacency with which we record the growth of humanitarian sentiment and service.

Nevertheless for most of the poor many things are better than they used to be. For the majority of the workers—the majority still in more or less regular work—the betterment has been really substantial. It is no exaggeration to say that, for the working class as a whole, the standard of living in a purely material sense is three or four times as high as it was a hundred years ago, and for those in regular employment higher to-day than it has ever been before save during the piping times of war. We Socialists have no need to belittle this advance, which is the natural outcome of the vast increase in productivity that has accompanied the growth of science and man's enlarged command over the forces of nature. The harvest of the technical revolution could not have been garnered at all unless the poor had been given some share in its fruits. The question for us is not whether the standard of living has advanced

everyone knows that it has—but whether it has advanced fast enough, and whether it can continue to advance within the framework of our present social system. If it has, and can, well and good : nothing we Socialists can say will avail to break the existing system down. For men make revolutions not at will but only when they must.

If, however, we are now in danger in our derelict areas of making new slums for old ; if the forces of commercial competition in a world market limited by the power of mass consumption put paradoxically more and more obstacles in the way of increasing wages ; if national and imperial capitalisms threaten more and more to tear the world to pieces with war ; then indeed the Socialist solution is worth considering in a practical sense. For to-day almost no one dares to contend that poverty is good for the poor. A century or so ago there were many who held this view, preaching that poverty would school the poor in the virtues of abnegation and make them fitter for heaven. But to-day we find it hard to acquit Hannah More and her fellow-labourers of conscious hypocrisy : so far have we moved from their mode of thought and belief. Capitalism must defend itself nowadays by the plea that it really enriches the poor, not that it keeps them impoverished for their good. It follows that, if it can be shown that capitalism is failing to enrich them, and that it is positively damping down the powers of production which modern science has called into being, the indictment is formidable and without an answer. "Love in a cottage" was once a romantic theme : "Love on the dole" is acknowledged tragedy, only less tragic than that still unwritten drama "Love on the P.A.C."

We want men to be richer, and there is nothing sordid or basely materialist in wanting that. For it is good to be rich, up to the point to which riches are as yet a possibility for the most of men. It is good not to be stinted of material

things, not to need to keep worrying about halfpennies or to be frightened about the future, good to be able to enjoy a bit of fun without too narrowly counting the cost, and good no less to be rich enough to be generous to our friends and neighbours. Great are the pleasures of benevolence, and there is no reason why they should be the monopoly of the few. As knowledge grows, opportunity grows with it ; and opportunity creates fresh needs. As productivity grows, and we can reduce the hours of labour, leisure increases ; and leisure costs money if it is to be more than mere twiddling of the thumbs. We cannot compare the ages solely in terms of the goods their money would buy ; for men's needs have advanced with advancing knowledge fully as fast as the means of satisfying them. Town life creates needs which are not felt in the country : the great city creates needs that are unknown in the little town. A world linked up by speed and easy travel and communication incurs therewith new costs of cultured living. Popular culture becomes the great "oncost" of the mechanised civilisation of to-day and to-morrow.

The question then is not "Have we advanced ?" but "How fast can we advance with the resources that lie ready to our hands ?" But that is not the only question ; for to-day even the inadequate advances we have made are growingly threatened. The second question must be "Can we hope to go on advancing even at a snail's pace by the methods that have served us so far, or within the limits of the system under which past advances have been made ?" Can we, indeed, even hope to stand still under a system of which the essence is perpetual motion ? We have barely passed through a great war that has brought our civilisation near to ruin : yet already we are threatened by another which promises to be still more deadly and devastating than the last. We have built up a productive structure that threatens to topple over, not because it

produces too little but because cheapness born of plenty menaces it with bankruptcy within the limited market to which its inadequate methods of distribution condemn it. We have developed the world with a view to exchanging its products in accordance with the principle of the international division of labour ; yet behold every country throwing up dykes and bastions to keep out the goods that could enrich its inhabitants. A situation so extraordinary needs at any rate to be explained if it is to command men's tolerance ; but what explanation are we offered beyond the old promptitude of the pot in calling the kettle black ? No wonder, amid such absurdities, men lose patience and follow after blind leaders in preference to none at all. For hope is preferable to despair even if hope rest on illusion. But how much better is it when hope stands on solid ground and can advance good reasons for its faith.

In the world of to-day no one need be poor, at any rate in any western country, and within a brief space of time in any country at all. That one fact sharply differentiates our age from any previous epoch. Never until now have the means to good living been plainly and in the not distant future within the grasp of the entire human race. Never before has it been open to the rich man or the rich country to pile up the plate of the poor without fear of going short. In every previous age it has been plausible to contend that equality could mean nothing better than a common misery, and that for the sake of art and culture and the advancement of human knowledge it was right for the few to batten upon the many. That argument, the universal defence of inequality in past ages, wherever the well-to-do thought fit to argue at all about their rights, is plainly invalid to-day. There can be enough for all, not merely up to the margin of bare necessity, but well beyond it.

There can be ; but there is not. For there cannot be, within the limiting conditions of a social system which

was built up to protect a scanty surplus against the devouring hunger of the poor. To that system we still cleave, although it has become obsolete and inappropriate to the conditions of to-day—though from protecting scarcity it has compelled us to turn to inducing it by artificial means. Poverty and enslavement! The world cleaves to them because it cannot credit the good fortune of our times, but rebels against plenty as if plenty and not scarcity were the primal curse. And yet, however slowly, the world is learning sense. Socialism encounters many setbacks, but it grows. The question is whether it can grow fast enough to prevail before the old order drags everything down in suicidal collapse. It can prevail if its exponents feel and communicate to the people the faith that will move mountains. It cannot prevail if we Socialists are so fearful of ourselves that we hold back from bold adventures and communicate not faith but timidity to those upon whom we are calling to create Socialism.

## CHAPTER III

### THE CAPITALIST FAILURE

CAPITALISM, by what it appeared to achieve in the course of the nineteenth century, dazzled the eyes of the world. In one country after another, as the new technique of power production spread, miracles of productivity came true. The technical revolution was extended from industry to agriculture, bringing with it fatter beasts and ampler crops that quite confounded the Malthusians. The new industrialism spread from its cradle in Great Britain through Western Europe and the new American continent. Japan awoke suddenly out of feudalism and equipped herself post-haste with the full armament of capitalist production. Power-driven machinery made its appearance in India and China ; and the uttermost parts of the earth were stirred into fevered activity by the insatiable demands of the developed countries for raw materials to feed their machines. Foreign trade ceased to be a matter mainly of luxuries, and began to deal on a vast scale with the absolute necessities of life. The agriculturist, cast down from his old predominance, got some of his own back by providing for the rapidly expanding markets of the industrial areas. Landlordism was half absorbed into capitalism ; but the landlord, in losing his old exclusive power, by no means forfeited his wealth. He grew richer along with the rest, and plunged into commercial and industrial investment side by side with the capitalist upstarts whom he had at first despised. The flow of goods marvellously increased : capitalism poured out upon the nations an ever-growing stream of wares for sale.

Of this new-found abundance the workers did not fail to receive a share. At any rate from the middle of the nineteenth century real wages rose sharply in the industrialised world and continued to rise until its end. Recurrent crises occasionally interrupted this advance ; but after each crisis it was resumed, and each fresh boom carried it to a higher level. The industrial population greatly increased, but, as we have seen, the average purchasing power of wages in Great Britain was probably three or four times as high in 1900 as it had been a century before. The total supply of goods had undoubtedly grown much faster than this in the advanced countries, even after allowing for the rapid growth of population. Aided by the new technique and the new science, labour of hand and brain became more and more productive as the century advanced, and capitalism was lauded far and wide as the bringer of plenty to the peoples of the earth.

On the whole, during this period capitalism was aiming at plenty. Except in times of crisis the output of goods and services was continually increasing, and most owners of businesses thought far more of extending and cheapening than of restricting production. Wages, indeed, were allowed to rise only with great reluctance and in response to increasing trade union pressure. For higher wages seemed to most employers to involve higher costs, and accordingly to interfere with the process of lowering prices in order to stimulate demand. Of the increasing supply of goods a large and growing share went to the rapidly expanding middle classes—professional men of every sort, traders and middlemen, owners and managers of productive enterprises. Another large and increasing part of the product was sent abroad to oust the handicraftsmen from their native markets or to develop industrialism over a wider field by means of the investment of capital overseas. These vents for the products of capitalist industry served to check

the rise of wages by making it possible for total demand to expand without a proportionate increase in working-class incomes. But, as we have seen, after the "hungry forties," wages did rise too, though not fast enough to correspond to the rate of increase in total productivity.

As long as capitalism was on the whole seeking to exploit the powers of production to the full, revolt against it was practically confined to the wage-earners. Indeed, when real wages began to rise steadily in the second half of the nineteenth century, the majority of the wage-earners abandoned the attitude of revolt which had been common in Owenite and Chartist days, and set to work instead to make the best of the capitalist system. Socialism, which had been a powerful force in the first half of the nineteenth century, went for a time out of fashion in Great Britain, maintaining and increasing its hold only in those countries which, having come later into the field with the new technique, were still passing through the earlier phases of capitalist growth. The Socialism of Karl Marx found its immediate followers in Germany and France and Russia far more than in Great Britain.

At this stage, capitalism was exploiting the workmen and piling up huge fortunes for the rising middle class. But for the most part these fortunes were flowing back into the productive system, there to create still more productivity and the offer of more employment for the growing population. Throughout the century mechanical invention was steadily reducing the quantity of labour needed to produce a given supply of goods, and no less steadily increasing the proportion of fixed capital to "labour" capital in the productive process. But the total market was growing fast enough to offset this tendency so as to prevent it from throwing labour permanently out of use. Dislocation there was, as a result of changing processes and the obsolescence of older forms of skill ; but there was room for the displaced labour to be absorbed

before long in other types of industry. As long as middle- and upper-class demand for goods and services grew fast, and foreign trade and investment provided an almost unlimited outlet for surplus products, crises could be overcome and expansion be resumed on an ever-increasing scale. Under these conditions the skilled workers mostly saw far less advantage in kicking against the pricks than in using trade unionism as a means of forcing up wages. To a small degree the skilled workers were admitted within the charmed circle of capitalist prosperity. Their wages rose, and they learnt to accept the system as offering them the opportunity to raise their standard of life by creating limited monopolies from which the less skilled workers were shut out.

Modern Socialism in Great Britain began with the revolt of the less skilled workers against this exclusion. The less skilled, lacking trade unions and unable to build up monopolies in the supply of specialised kinds of labour, had shared far less than the skilled in the benefits of rising productivity. In 1889 the London dockers combined, struck work, and, to the general astonishment, won their battle. In 1893 the Independent Labour Party, forerunner of the Labour Party of to-day, was founded under Keir Hardie's leadership.

The new Socialism in Great Britain was never Marxian, and seldom used Marxian phrases. The I.L.P., and not its predecessor, the Marxist Social Democratic Federation, captured the imagination of the younger workers. The I.L.P. was Socialist but not revolutionary ; and its immediate programme aimed far less at any sort of Socialism than at winning higher wages and improved conditions for the "bottom dogs." It wanted at some future time to "nationalise the means of production, distribution and exchange" ; but in the meantime it was well content to fight for a legal minimum wage, an eight hours day, maintenance for the unemployed, better housing, and some extension of municipal services in the interests of

the poor. The I.L.P., like the older trade unions of skilled workers, was trying to get a larger cut at the capitalist cake rather than to gobble up capitalism at once, cake and all, and set to work baking on a new principle.

The dockers won their fight, and over the following years a large section among the less skilled workers found their conditions substantially improved. There remained, however, a considerable residue whom nothing was done to help—agricultural labourers, sweated home-workers, slum-dwellers on the margin of employability, and the lower ranges of domestic service. But for a few years it seemed as if in some measure the fruits of capitalist enterprise were to be poured out over skilled and unskilled alike, and as if the surplus products of industrialism would avail to provide a rising standard for the whole body of the poor without checking either the spending or the accumulation of the rich.

And then, what happened? From about the end of the nineteenth century the rise in real wages was checked, for skilled and unskilled workers together. Growing competition in the world market strengthened capitalist resistance to increasing costs of production. Wages, held down for the sake of exports, had, under free trade conditions, to be kept down for the home market as well. The national income continued to rise fast, and the investment of capital abroad rose with it to unprecedented heights; but wages lagged behind. Moreover, trusts and combines, harbingers of a coming capitalist religion of scarcity, began to appear in growing numbers. In terms of total production and of total wealth, the opening decade of the twentieth century was a period of rapid capitalist advance. For the wage-earners in Great Britain it was on the whole a period of recession; and before it ended there were on the industrial horizon ominous clouds of trouble.

The great labour unrest of 1910–1914 followed, making British Socialism for the first time a formidable force.

The Liberal Government of those years did something to expand the social services by taxing the rich, but still more by making the poor contribute towards their own relief. Under the influence of strikes and threats to strike, wages rose a little in a good many trades. But even in 1914 real wages were a long way below the level at which they had stood when the century began. Productivity had risen, but the purchasing power of wages had fallen off—a highly significant reversal of the tendency which the Victorian age had assumed to be inherent in capitalist production.

Why did this come about? Primarily because competitive capitalism was beginning seriously to hit up against the limitations of the world market. Capitalist competes with capitalist both nationally and internationally in terms of productive costs. Wages are a cost of production; and if costs are to be reduced, wages must be kept down to the lowest point which is found to be compatible with efficient work. Under conditions of growing technical efficiency, the keeping down of wages should mean falling prices. But between 1900 and 1914 the cost of living in Great Britain rose by 17 per cent. Money wages rose on the average by only 6 per cent, and up to 1911 not at all. Real wages fell by 9 per cent. The reasons for the advance in prices were mainly monetary, and the advance extended to other countries besides Great Britain. But, unless the conditions of capitalist activity had greatly changed, the rise in the cost of living ought to have been more than offset by rising wage-rates accompanying the growth of productivity. That this did not happen is a clear sign that, even before the war, the capitalist world was already falling into an unbalanced condition, with increasing foreign investment more than ever needed to take the surplus goods off the domestic market.

How long this process of intensive investment overseas could have continued, or how far it could have been carried but for the Great War, there is no means of knowing.

What plainly appears is that the working-class standard of living, as far as it depended on wages, was determined by the international level of competitive costs, so that the entire surplus accruing from vast investments of capital abroad fell into the pockets of the owners of capital, from whom a portion of it could be retrieved not by advancing wages but only by using higher taxation as an instrument for the redistribution of wealth. Half-heartedly the Liberal Government did attempt to use taxation in this way, but not to any extent that could stop a relative shrinkage in the domestic demand for consumable goods, or prevent the level of home employment from depending more and more on the export of capital.

The situation which arose in the capitalist world during the early years of the twentieth century was calculated both to threaten free trade and to encourage the growth of restrictive tendencies among the capitalists. Conscious of the limitations of the home market and the growing competitiveness abroad, an increasing section of capitalist opinion began on the one hand to demand domestic monopoly and therefore to press for a tariff against foreign imports, and on the other hand to build up monopolistic combines both for the regulation of prices in the home market and for the increase of their competitive and bargaining power in the markets of the world. The first great attack on free trade, headed by Joseph Chamberlain, was beaten back by the Liberals, with the support of the workers, who feared a still sharper rise in the cost of living. But the refusal of a tariff intensified the growth of capitalist combines and provided a continued reason for increasing resistance to demands for higher wages. Aided by preferences in the markets of the Empire, and by the intensive export of capital, British industry up to 1914 was holding its own in the world market as a whole. But its hold was growing more precarious as other countries brought their

technical equipment up to, and in some cases past, the British level, and as, with developing industrialisation, these countries filled up their own home markets with domestic products and began to compete more intensively in world trade.

The war, bringing with it the need for systematic organisation of many industries under the orders of the State, greatly speeded up the pace of industrial combination and sapped the foundations of the free-trade system. The temporary withdrawal of British exporters from the world market caused the neutral countries to develop their own industries and led above all to the rapid growth of the cotton industry in the Far East. The nations emerged from the war far more protectionist in spirit than they had gone into it ; for each new country was set on building up a complete industrial equipment of its own, and the losers went hard to work to replace within their narrowed territories whatever industries had been torn from them under the Treaties of Peace. For a few years after 1918 agricultural tariffs remained low ; for it took time to rebuild European agriculture after the devastations of war, and in the meantime the peoples had to be fed. But as soon as the devastated areas had got back to production, and there had been time for the efficiency of farming to be restored to its old level, or in some cases improved, high agricultural protection was added to high tariffs on industrial goods. For a few years longer the market for international investment of capital was sustained by German rationalisation under the Dawes Plan ; and the import of American capital helped to keep up the level of European demand. But the conditions of the years before 1929 were feverish and unsound ; and even during the boom it became more and more evident that, whereas productive technique in agriculture as well as industry was advancing at an unexampled pace, the available markets were far too narrow to carry off the increasing stream of goods which the world economic

system was equipped to supply. In the United States, where the boom went furthest, factory employment did not increase at all, and agricultural employment substantially diminished, between 1923 and 1929. Large surpluses of unemployed labour existed in both Germany and Great Britain before the slump ; and the effect of new inventions was rather to drive existing equipment out of use than to enlarge the total volume of goods and services consumed. Industrial combination made further great strides both nationally and by the linking up of national into international combines. Output began to be restricted internationally by means of "quotas" and agreed allocations of markets. The capitalist system, instead of making technical improvement serve the common ends of the people, turned more and more to the regulation of output as a means of preventing the threatened collapse of prices.

Socialists had foretold these developments long before they actually came about. Karl Marx, fully half a century before the event, had striven to focus attention on the necessary consequences of the progressive accumulation of capital and the increasing severity of international competition in checking the advance of the standard of living and provoking recurrent crises of "underconsumption." Much later, Mr. J. A. Hobson restated Marx's argument in less trenchant terms, and related the growing capitalist tension to the growth of imperialism and rivalry between the great imperialist Powers. At the times when these prophecies were made they were commonly scoffed at as flatly contradicted by the actual trend of events. According to Marx, it was said, the workers ought to have been getting steadily poorer ; but capitalism obstinately persisted in enriching them. According to Marx, capitalist crises ought to have been getting worse ; but their intensity was actually diminishing. According to Marx, the inequalities of income between rich and poor ought to have been increasing, and

the proportion of the national income accruing to the owners of capital ought to have been rising at the expense of the workers' share. But actually, it was urged, inequality was getting less, or at any rate the distribution of incomes was steadily following a Pareto Line.<sup>1</sup>

To a substantial extent these answers were factually true when they were made ; and some of them remain true to-day. In spite of the depression of the past few years, standards of living are actually higher now for workers in full employment than they were before the war, and in addition there has been some curtailment of the hours of labour. Real wages of fully employed workers in Great Britain have actually risen since 1929 on account of falling prices, though against this rise has to be reckoned a great increase in unemployment and insecurity. In certain other countries, however, notably the United States and Germany, the working-class standard of living has suffered a lamentable fall, which the defenders of capitalism have to explain away as due to temporary and abnormal conditions. It is true that crises seemed, until the great depression of the years since 1929 broke upon the nations, to be getting somewhat less intense ; but the crisis of recent years has gone beyond all precedent in both intensity and duration. Finally, though the available statistics seemed to show that there had been no great change in the share of the national income accruing to the wage-earners, it did appear that the extremes of inequality had been somewhat lessened through redistributive taxation and, at a higher level, by the rapid increase of the incomes of the salary-earning group.

It was possibly, easily in 1914, and still plausibly in 1929, to contend that Marx had been proved a false prophet, and that at bottom all was well with the capitalist system. In the United States, during the years immediately before 1929, panegyrics of capitalism were carried to the most

<sup>1</sup> See p. 76.

extravagant lengths. It was claimed that American individualism, already well on the way towards solving the problem of poverty, could look forward confidently to a continuous and increasingly rapid advance in prosperity, that high profits were the necessary complement of social progress, and that the ownership of industry was being speedily democratised by the spread of popular investment in corporation stocks. In Great Britain, in face of the depression in the mining, shipbuilding and textile areas, it was not possible to indulge in such fantasies of optimism ; but even in Great Britain it was confidently maintained that the troubles of the older basic industries were but the growing pains of a new era of capitalist progress, which would find its outlet in the rise of new industries providing for the mass consumption of cheaper luxuries produced under conditions of intensive mechanisation. In Great Britain no one could pretend that all was well ; but there were many who put down all our troubles to an over-valued currency, an industrial structure in transition to changed conditions of demand, or some other defect that seemed to admit of cure without changing the basic character of the economic system.

What has become of these complacencies now ? They are by no means over and done with ; but at all events the professors of complacency have been put on the defensive. They are compelled by now to argue, not that all is well, but that Great Britain has so far come through the great depression with far less damage than most of her neighbours. Complacency, which was once absolute, has become relative. We are asked to congratulate ourselves not on being well off but on being at any rate better off than our competitors.

If that is enough to satisfy us, there is no more to be said. For admittedly Great Britain has up to the present weathered the storm a good deal better than any of the other great capitalist Powers. A few other countries, notably Sweden and Denmark, have fared at least as well, perhaps

better. But they are small countries, and British public opinion does not pay much attention to their doings. Compare us with any other great Power, it is said, and the strength and toughness of British capitalism will be plainly revealed.

Well, British capitalism is strong and tough. No Socialist will be likely to deny that. It would, indeed, be a very strange thing if it were not strong and tough after a century of industrial leadership which has made Great Britain by far the biggest creditor country in the world. The world owes us money—lots of money—on account of our vast investments overseas ; and these debts, in view of the immense fall in the prices of the foodstuffs and the raw materials which we chiefly import, have given us a claim to a greatly increased quantity of imports for which we need send out no exports in exchange. Currency depreciation—the fall in the gold value of the pound—has done something to lessen the burden of these claims upon the debtor countries ; but, measured in goods, they remain immense. Chiefly on account of them we have been relatively successful in maintaining our standards of living through the depression. For our tariff, and even Major Elliot's quotas, have not yet done a great deal to prevent our debtors from meeting their obligations in kind. The British camel has been living on his hump ; and it is so big a hump that its size has not been noticeably diminished. If other countries would but let us alone—apart from continuing to pay us what they owe in low-priced goods—we could go on living on our hump for a long time yet.

This state of things, however, is a clear sign not of health but of disease. The patient—British capitalism—is capable of living for a good many years yet, unless he is subjected to any sudden shock ; but he has gone to Torquay, not to recuperate but to pass his declining years. His doctors have warned him against too much exertion, and he is thinking

out ways and means of living a quiet life. Too much labour is not good for him : so he must devise methods of keeping a large part of his working force unemployed. In lusty youth he cried out for more hands to labour ; but now he has much ado to find occupation for the hands he has. He can only look forward to the days when the further decay of his forces—through falling population—will make him bear more easily with having less to do.

British capitalism to-day is hypochondriacal, and no longer eager for adventures. It is conservative, with the distaste for change that goes with age, and fussy about trifles, with a deep reluctance to face fundamental issues. Our Victorian forefathers, whatever their faults, were robust money-makers. Their descendants sit by the fire, dreaming of past glories, and censuring unhelpfully the often ill-directed kicks of youth against the pricks of their diminishing authority. Why should they seek, at their time of life, after new ways of living ? Whoever is poor, they are rich ; and the increment of past accumulations will last their time, if only the disturbers of the peace will let it be. Truly the British camel has a big hump ; and what are humps for if not to live on in the desert ?

But even the Sahara has a further side : this desert of latter-day capitalism has none. British capitalism is heading not for recovery but for gradual—very gradual—starvation and decay. Our export trade is slipping away from us, as other countries develop industrial systems of their own and throw up high protective walls to keep out British goods. It is slipping from us, as Japan undercuts our textile industries in one market after another, and as our lead in productive efficiency grows smaller with spreading mechanisation, which lowers the comparative advantage of highly skilled labour and high quality products, and as our manufacturers show themselves less adaptable than others to changing forces of demand. The advantage in

mass production rests either with a huge population to provide a huge home market or with a large supply of very cheap labour—and we have neither of these. Our markets are markets for consumption goods of high quality and for capital goods. But the high quality market is far less expansible than the market for cheaper commodities ; and the market for capital goods depends on foreign investment, which the depression has killed and which can in any event be sustained only at the expense of the immediate domestic standard of life. We are well off to-day in comparison with other countries, for we have great possessions inherited from the past. But our prospects are poor, if we consent to remain within the boundaries of capitalist production.

Capitalism, however, still has power to chain us down. For out of its riches it can still afford to distribute doles in order to keep the workless from insurrection, as well as to maintain those for whom it finds employment at a standard well above that of any other great European country. As long as this state of affairs continues, many will be found to argue that there is nothing fundamentally wrong. For as long as the beasts are fed, why worry about the future, when anything may turn up before it faces us as the present ? Revolutions are not made on full bellies ; and in Great Britain the majority of bellies are still reasonably full. There are no doubt plenty of emptyish bellies on Clydeside and Tyneside and in South Wales. But the depressed areas cannot make a revolution by themselves ; they can only clamour for scraps from the tables of the better-off. Great Britain, therefore, we are told, is not “ripe” for Socialism ; for to be ripe for Socialism a country needs to be rotten ripe through and through.

So many think ; and maybe they are right. But it is a pitiable prospect if we have to slide down into the abyss in order to give ourselves further to climb. If only empty bellies make revolutions, may not emptying bellies at any

rate attempt reformations? Must things really get so much worse before they can begin to get better? If so, the more fools we, when the remedies lie so ready to our hands. We built up the British economic system on the assumptions of monopoly. We assumed that we, and we alone, held the secret of power production, and that it was the historic mission of Great Britain to clothe and equip the world. So, for a time, it was; for we had a long lead and great resources of skill and enterprise. But monopoly of this sort cannot last. In the nature of the case it must communicate its elixir to others. As they follow, it must adapt itself to equality, cease to exploit the world for its exclusive benefit, and live as one nation among others like itself. It can do this only by relying more and more on the purchasing power of its own people—which is the counterpart of the people's power to produce. This does not mean that it must strive to keep out foreign goods in order to expand home employment; for that way lies impoverishment and deprivation of necessary products. It means that the community must be equipped to increase its consumption as fast as its productive power increases, and must rely on its own consuming power, and not on the export of capital, as the means of keeping its population at work. It may still export capital to countries that need it more. But it must not allow itself to depend on this enforced export. It must be able to do without it and yet keep all its available productive resources at work, up to the point at which it regards more leisure as preferable to more goods. It must exchange goods for goods with foreign countries; for mutual exchanges of products make possible a higher standard of living for both exchangers. But it must so organise its economic life that the exchange of products does not turn into a means of disemploying its people and its capital resources, or of forcing down its standards of living and so restricting its domestic consumption below the level of its power to produce.

## CHAPTER IV

### WILL SOCIALISM WORK?

IT IS POSSIBLE for decent-minded people to endorse the critique of capitalism which I have just summarised, and yet to reject Socialism only if they can somehow persuade themselves that Socialism, for all its obvious attractions and moral superiorities over capitalism, nevertheless will not work. There is a strong temptation to believe this, not only for those who are rich enough for Socialism to threaten them with material loss, but also for those who for any reason are disposed to look upon their fellow-creatures with a jaundiced eye. For clearly Socialism does call upon men to live up to a higher ethical standard than capitalism. It does propose to depend a great deal less on the incentives on which society at present relies for getting most of its work done, and to put far more trust in incentives which depend for their power on men's readiness to work one for another and not merely for themselves alone. In addition the Socialist demand for a planned economy neatly co-ordinated in all its essential parts obviously calls upon men for a larger and more rational effort at social organisation and control than capitalism has demanded of them ; and, if this planning is to be democratic, Socialism requires further that men should make much fuller and more constructive use of their rights of citizenship than they have ever made in the past, save perhaps in the small City States of Ancient Greece.

Will men do these things ? Most people who are personally

comfortable enough to feel on that score no urge for change are inclined to answer at once that men will not, and that the Socialists are cherishing impossible delusions about "human nature." Most rich men, in enjoyment of wide power as well as of material comfort and security, assert this view with the greatest confidence. Some stress chiefly men's moral shortcomings, and assert that the only forces capable of driving the vast majority to labour are the hope of material gain, the fear of privation, and the desire for social advancement and superior power. Others emphasise rather the difficulties of collective organisation, and cast doubts on human ability to plan with success so vast a structure as Socialist policy envisages; while yet others stress the certain failure of human capacity to keep so vast a mechanism under any real democratic control, and dismiss Socialism as the apotheosis of bureaucracy.

The poor man's case against Socialism is usually a good deal less articulate than the rich man's. It rests largely on an inability, and an assertion of inability in others, to take wide enough views or feel wide enough sympathies to make a collective system practicable. It is based on a denial that for most practical purposes most men's views and sympathies can be expected to spread at normal times beyond the narrow circle of personal interest and family attachment. Those who feel in this way arrive at much the same conclusions as their "betters": Socialism, they tell us, will not work, because Socialism flies in face of "human nature."

We Socialists reject these attitudes, partly because we think better than those who hold them of the possibilities of "human nature," but also partly because we believe that the anti-Socialists' assertions about the changes in "human nature" which Socialism requires are grossly exaggerated in respect both of men's moral behaviour and of their collective competence. In both these respects

Socialism does ask more of men than capitalism asks, or it could not hope to offer superior fruits. But how much more does it ask? How much change in human nature does the successful working of a Socialist society imply?

The question needs breaking up. It really involves at least two main issues. First, how much niceness, or virtue, does Socialism demand of the ordinary man or woman beyond their present possession of these qualities? Secondly how much more cleverness or capacity for collective organisation does Socialism require? We can add two supplementary questions—how abrupt, or how rapid, a change in either of these respects is needed in order to make Socialism a workable solution of the social problem? Let us do what we can to answer these questions and then come back in the light of our answers to the main issue, whether Socialism will actually work.

The first question relates to human "niceness." I am prepared to assert unhesitatingly that the great majority of people are fundamentally nice. They are by nature and instinct amiable, friendly, well-disposed, and ready to recognise the claims of common justice whenever these claims present themselves in forms which they are able to understand. I am not asserting this of all men, but only of the great majority. There, are, I think, especially three kinds of people to whom it does not apply. First, there are people who have been spoilt by power or pampering and have grown so used to lording it over others as to regard subordination of ordinary folks to their whims and interests as an unquestionable right. To this class are apt to belong judges, headmasters and other persons used to the exercise of unanswerable authority, "self-made" men of business, and some, but by no means all, members of the hereditary privileged classes. Secondly, there are people who have been spoilt not by success but by the sense of failure, and have been rendered unamiable by a feeling that the world is

against them. These include many square pegs in round holes, many clever but under-educated poor men who feel themselves in possession of natural capacities which can find no outlet, and some people who have been thwarted by ill-health or physical defect from playing a part in the world at all commensurate with their powers. Thirdly, there are the "brutes," mostly brought up in bad homes and owing their brutishness far more to defects of nurture and environment than to any ineradicable baseness in their natures, but including some few—the most dangerous of all because they are often the possessors of very forcible and thrustful characters—who are naturally and incurably brutish and evil and incapable of living on decent terms with their fellow-men.

Of these three groups the first and the second—and also, alas, the second smaller section among the third—include many persons of exceptionally high ability, capable of rendering society exceedingly valuable service if their energies can be directed aright. Apart from the third group, which is a source of danger to any society, I suggest that a great deal of their present "nastiness" is due to society as it is offering them either too much or too little. They are nasty largely because society has either lavished upon them powers and gratifications which put too great a strain on their decency, or has twisted them awry by refusing them fair scope for the exercise of their qualities. It is bad for human nature to get either all or none of its own way: both experiences breed anti-social types of mind. A society which succeeded better in opening opportunities of effective work and service to many diverse types of ability by equalising the chances to a greater extent among all its members, a society less prodigal of rewards and powers to the pre-eminent few, and more generous in its appreciation of valuable social qualities of a secondary order, would stand a fair chance of enabling both these prevalent types of

"nasty fellow" to remain as nice as the ordinary run of men and women whose abilities and successes have been both of the middle sort.

As for the third group, the real "brutes," I think there would be very few of them if every child were born with the prospect of being brought up in a decent home and a friendly social environment and with a fair chance of physical health and competent training for mind and body. A few "louts" there would still be under any social system ; for diseased minds can no more be wholly eradicated than diseased or crippled bodies. But the "brute" would soon come to be as exceptional in society as a whole as he is already in those social strata to which good conditions of nurture apply. Even where he remained, he would be less "brutish" ; for the less society suffers itself to be ruled by the law of the jungle, the less will the "brutes" be able to indulge their brutality.

These groups apart, I am sure most people are "nice." But their "niceness" is not absolute, and it is always necessary to bear in mind that most people are weak as well as nice. Their instincts incline them to behave decently one to another ; but they cannot afford to behave nicely at too high a cost. They are not heroes or saints or potential martyrs, but rather stupid people prepared to deal fairly by others within limits set by their notions of a fair deal for themselves and their capacity for putting themselves in other people's places. They are very easily influenced by their environment to behave either well or ill ; and the actual tone of their behaviour is in practice set largely by the motives to which their environment allows the freest play. They are for the most part very ignorant about the ulterior consequences of their actions and very bad at thinking abstract thoughts. They are in general kindly to people whom they actually meet and know, including quite casual strangers, unless something has frightened them or

put them into a suspicious mood ; but their charity does not easily extend itself into the unknown. An abstraction such as "the unemployed" or "the submerged tenth" is apt to mean very little to them, whereas a known individual who is workless or destitute may mean a great deal. Politics, which perforce deals largely in generalisations rather than in individual cases, often fails to stir their sympathy because it does not rouse their imaginations, though with the spread of popular education theoretical generalisation has become a stronger political weapon than it used to be. Most people are ready to sympathise and to behave decently ; but their imagination has to be aroused in order to set their sympathy to work.

If this is a true picture of most men's state of mind under normal conditions, it follows that the tone of society as a whole will be determined largely by the degree to which it is organised for the stimulation of human sympathy and by the character of the motives to which the social system makes its strongest and most pervasive appeals. As matters stand, by far the strongest appeal in everyday life is made to those motives which run directly counter to the encouragement of mutual sympathy and generous dealing between man and man. Most people are expected and encouraged to pursue material gain as their principal object of endeavour, and to a great extent to pursue it on the assumption that one man's gain must be another man's loss. They are constantly told that competition—for power, for profits or for employment—is the only incentive which is capable of eliciting a high productive response ; and for the most part society is so organised that men must either act in this spirit or be driven to the wall. It is even not so long since the Churches were joining hands with the State and the economists in preaching that by a merciful dispensation of providence each man would best promote his neighbour's good fortune by seeking his own. This gospel of a

"pre-ordained harmony" has gone somewhat out of fashion in these days, at any rate in its cruder forms. But many relics of it still survive, and it remains at the very foundation of the ethical defences of capitalism—even if increasing efforts are made to cover its nakedness by modern apologists of the existing system.

It is hardly surprising if, under a system which threatens men with ruin unless they keep their eyes steadily on the main chance, the majority of people are actually impelled to work largely by selfish material motives. Under the existing conditions they have no choice. But evidence of how men behave when they are subjected to the stimulus of one set of motives is by no means sufficient evidence of their probable behaviour under the influence of quite different stimuli. Our present economic system makes almost no use of men's natural kindness and sense of fair play. It gives them almost no chance of demonstrating, or even of experiencing, the will to work well in the common service. It sets them to piling up profits for an impersonal body of money-grubbing shareholders in a joint stock concern, so that the most natural attitude to their work is to get as much for it as they can, because what they get seems to be taken not from society but from claimants who have certainly less right to it than they have themselves. Outside industry—in the social services, in voluntary associations and groups of many different kinds, and in purely personal relationships—the impulses towards sympathy and good fellowship are given far more room to flourish. They do flourish far more than we have any right to expect in view of the conditions under which most men are compelled to earn their bread. But industry will for the most part have nothing to do with these social impulses, save for an occasional attempt to twist them into a "team spirit" in the interest of an enterprising firm of profit-makers.

Nevertheless, though the workman would be but logical

if he did regard his work strictly in a business spirit, and did aim at giving as little as possible in return for as much as he could exact, in practice remarkably few workmen do behave in this way. Most people do carry their sense of decent dealing into the factory or office, and recognise, even under capitalism and apart from the coercions imposed upon them, an obligation to do a fair day's work even for an unfair day's pay. Thank goodness they do ; for it is demoralising to malinger, and malingering makes men unhappy into the bargain. But if most men are ready to work reasonably well for a system which offers them few enough inducements beyond those of sheer coercion—if they are ready for the most part to work harder and better than they need do merely in order to hold their jobs—surely this strongly suggests that they would work at least as well, if not a good deal better, under a system which set out to harness their instinctive sympathies and loyalties in the cause of efficient service. The fear that men will turn lazier under Socialism has always seemed to me quite groundless : on the contrary I feel sure that a Socialist system will be able to unloose impulses to collective service that are dammed up hopelessly under the capitalist system.

In later chapters of this book I shall try to suggest the conditions under which these impulses to collective service can be most effectively aroused and organised. At this point I am concerned only to show that they exist, ready to be made use of as soon as we make up our minds to appeal to them. I am not suggesting that we should try to pass over suddenly and completely from an exclusive reliance on men's egoism to an equally exclusive reliance on their capacity for sympathy and co-operative service. Obviously we neither should nor can. What we need to do is to bring new incentives into play in order that, as fast as they get into effective activity, we may be able to dispense more and more with those incentives which are of such a sort as to

set man against man. I do not suggest a flying leap from capitalism into equality. There are stepping-stones by whose help we can cross the stream.

If further evidence is needed of the will to service in men which industry at present lets run uselessly to waste, it can be found in the omnipresence of voluntary social activity. Every voluntary society that does anything at all worth doing—and there are many thousands of them—depends for its success on the labour, mostly unpaid and largely even unthanked, of its “voluntary workers.” Day in and day out there are countless people all over the country doing jobs, often quite unpleasant jobs, neither for money nor for thanks but because they feel called upon to do them. At present a high proportion of this energy is spent in palliating evils which ought to be eradicated altogether, in protesting against abuses that ought to be swept away, and in defending the weak against depredations by the strong such as Socialism would make wholly impossible. A large proportion of this energy could, under a better system, be released for service in the cause of production ; and much more would flow under Socialism into the raising of cultural and social standards of living.

Beyond this, a wider diffusion of educational opportunities and a removal of sheer physical privation during the years of childhood and youth would set free immense additional energies. At present a great part of human potentiality for service is lost for want of early encouragement. It flows away into all sorts of merely useless or positively anti-social activities, or is wasted altogether because no satisfying method of expression is put in its way. If the general run of men were healthier, as they easily could be, if their digestions were better, as they would be with better food, if they knew more, had seen more, and had enjoyed a wider experience of human friendship, if they were freer to choose work that suited them, and to change their jobs

if they had chosen mistakenly or simply wanted a change, if they could feel less unsure of the future and surer of themselves and their place in the social order, if the routine work of society were more equitably shared, and the more responsible posts filled by choice of the most capable without restrictions based on class-monopolies of education and social prestige, surely it is clear both that the everyday work of the world would be far more competently and cheerfully done and that a vastly greater surplus of human energy would flow out into all manner of useful activities outside and apart from the organised routine of economic production. I do not deny that laziness is an important part of most men's make-up : I do deny emphatically that free men are lazier than slaves, or healthy men than "crocks," or happy men than men who are worried and harried by constant uncertainty about the future.

I believe that, if we organise towards equality, we shall liberate pent-up human energy and goodwill to a degree that will before long triumphantly refute the sceptics. But there remains the second dubiety—whether men, even if they mean well enough, are clever enough to organise the intricate work of production in accordance with a collective plan. As to that, I am under no delusions about human cleverness. Men are, as Carlyle once said, "mostly fools," and there need be no hesitation in admitting the fact, if one realises that one is oneself a fool with the rest. I am well aware that I, like most other people, am a fool. In comparison with the few things I know, the things of which I am wholly ignorant are as the sands of the sea-shore. I do not know whether a particular patch of land is more suitable for growing wheat or hops. I do not know whether or when it is best to treat coal by hydrogenation or low-temperature carbonisation. I do not know whether the grid is as technically efficient as it ought to be or not. I do not know whether it is really desirable to scrap half the plant

in the Lancashire cotton industry and start over again with new machines. Yet I set up to be an economist and to advise people about economic affairs. All these questions about which I know next to nothing stand quite near to my own speciality, to which I have devoted a good deal of study. If I invade the field of other men's specialities—for example, the sciences—I cannot even understand what they are talking about, much less venture an opinion myself.

But the limitations of knowledge which I share with all the "experts" are by no means the most important point. Quite apart from just not knowing things I am exceedingly likely to make faults of judgment even where I possess the means of judging aright. For I have any number of prejudices, and a common habit of attending at a particular moment so much to one aspect of a thing as to lose sight of other aspects which are no less relevant to a sound decision. Moreover, if my food has disagreed with me, or if something has happened to worry me, I am liable to express opinions so startlingly silly that when confronted with them afterwards I usually deny ever having expressed them at all.

This is not humility, for I am not humble. It is simple common sense. In these days of specialisation nobody can know more than a very few of the facts that should go to help towards a sound judgment; and the specialist who knows some of the facts but not others is very liable to give the wrong advice. Moreover, I think nearly everybody shares my habit of having his "good days" and his "bad days," of being capable of the most appalling "bloomers" even about things on which his judgment is normally good.

But these limitations upon human capacity seem to me to point not away from a planned economy but very strongly towards it. For they increase the need for co-operative judgment in reaching practical decisions. Where no one can know all the relevant facts, practical judgments can

best be made by comparing and synthesising the opinions of a number of experts. Where everyone is liable to be an idiot, everyone needs equals authorised to criticise his projects and prevent him from making a fool of himself. The individual business man can no longer master all the technique required for the efficient conduct of his business. He must rely on his experts and on his own power to make a synthesis of their advice. But I would far sooner rely not on the power of the individual business man but on the collective judgment of a group of competent people with the fullest expert data available for their consideration. The more industry becomes an expert business and the greater the need for a diversity of expert advice, the weaker is the case for a planless economy ; for the best advice can hardly be made available to the individual business unless it is on a vast scale. But private business on a vast scale means not, planlessness but corporative planning in the interests of limited monopoly. It achieves technical planning without subordinating it to a social purpose. In modern mechanised industry full technical efficiency is usually unattainable except on the grand scale ; but as soon as the scale is enlarged, the call for competence in administration is fully as great as it could be under a complete Socialist system. It is, indeed, positively easier to plan all industries together than each industry as a separate unit. For each independent sectional plan is liable to upset and invalidate all the others. The less assured men are of the ultimate soundness of individual judgment, the more they stand in need of taking counsel together for the control of the monster which they have brought to birth.

I know that a good deal has been said about the collective stupidity of committees. I do not agree. I hold that men are in general remarkably good at working together when they are in possession of a clearly conceived agreed objective. Their fundamental "niceness" then stands them in

good stead : their sense of fair play helps to make their collaboration fruitful. Men are at their worst when they are set to act collectively without having a common object. Committees made up to represent divergent interests are nearly always inefficient. But men are at their best when, knowing what they want to achieve, they come together to work out ways and means of achieving it. The common purpose gives them fellowship, and out of the fellowship comes a strength beyond that of any of the co-operating individuals. I am a great believer in committees—on condition that they are made up of members who know and agree about what they are trying to achieve.

Men's individual incompetence therefore seems to me to strengthen the case for co-operative planning. Dictators are never to be trusted, whatever may be their technical competence within a particular field. For no field of practical action is particular, in the sense of coming wholly within the range of any one man's technical accomplishment. The best engineer is often a very poor judge of men ; but it takes men to build a bridge. The expert is the best adviser within the field of his own knowledge, but he makes a bad master because he is apt to mistake his little field for the whole round world.

But, our objector persists, will men, weak and incompetent as they are, ever be able to control co-operatively the huge forces of the modern productive system ? Will not planning mean in practice the dominance of the expert, whose force will be magnified a hundredfold by the sheer size of the organisation of which modern technique will make him master ? The answer to this is, first, that large-scale production being indispensable for the creation of plenty, we are no longer free to choose a system which will render insignificant the effect of single errors of judgment. Modern production, whether it be capitalistically or socialistically controlled, necessarily carries with it the possibility

of huge blunders being made. The practical choice lies between trusting to the control of the various technical experts, whose views have to be synthesised in reaching a decision, either by the expert profit-maker or by the representative of the democracy. But if the profit-maker is allowed to control, he will use control for his own end, which is profit; and not for the common welfare. Democracy, even if it makes mistakes, will at any rate be trying to use control in the interests of the whole people. Nor is there any reason why, from the standpoint of sheer efficiency, democratic control should in any way fall behind the control of the financial interests.

For democracy is not called upon to *manage*, but only to appoint, inspire, criticise and correct, its representatives. It has to set them an appointed task and leave them to choose ways and means of achieving what it wants. This control cannot, of course, be effective unless it knows with a reasonable degree of clearness what it does want. As long as society is organised on a basis of class divisions and divergent economic interests, no mere ballot-box democracy will work effectively, because there can be no sufficient basis of agreement about the ends to be pursued. But in a classless society the end will not be in doubt. It will be clearly conceived in terms of the greatest welfare and happiness of the greatest number. In the light of this end, the democracy will be able to issue clear directives of policy to those whom it appoints to render it responsible service. If democracy knows what it wants, its servants will be in no dubiety about their mission.

Of course I am not arguing that democracy will be fully effective. No system is. The success of democracy is bound to depend on the degree of alertness and public spirit permeating its members. But it is surely clear that every advance that the community is able to make in its standards of culture and education will stimulate these qualities. No

system will avail to make every citizen public-spirited or alert. But a system designed to foster public spirit and to stir men to active citizenship by a general diffusion of education for power and responsibility will greatly increase the human resources on which society can draw for making its democracy real. The true enemy of successful democratic institutions is class inequality. In a classless society, directing all its efforts to the creation of plenty and culture for all its citizens, it is reasonable to hope for an increase not only in men's niceness and willingness to serve, but also in their capacity for collective action in the control of the essential social forces.

## CHAPTER V

### FREEDOM AND CONDUCT

WHAT SORT OF SOCIETY do we want? I know the sort I want. I want a society in which I shall have no cause to feel ashamed when I look my fellow-men in the face. I want a society in which no one is avoidably poor or miserable or stunted in mind or body, or desperately overworked, or denied the chance of working according to his abilities in the common service. I want a society in which children and old people are properly looked after and given a decent share in the product of those who are of working age. I want a society in which extremes of riches and poverty are both absent, and the idea of class-distinctions, as apart from distinctions of skill, brain-power, artistic or scientific capacity, or sheer ordinary niceness or good looks, are quite unknown. I want a society in which, as far as possible, everybody gets a good chance, and those who are too feeble to profit by their chance get something more.

That is a good deal; but I want more than that. I want people to enjoy freedom as well as material well-being. Material security goes, indeed, a long way towards the realisation of freedom; for when people are secure they enjoy therewith a far better chance of choosing their own ways of living than they can possibly have when they are continually worried about the future. But I want freedom in a still more positive sense than that—freedom to mix with the people one likes without class distinctions to create awkwardness or put artificial barriers in the way; freedom not to bother about ceremonies or conventions whose usefulness

one does not recognise or accept ; freedom not to do things one does not like doing as much as freedom to do things one does like doing, subject always to respect for the equal claims of others. I want a free society in the sense of a free-and-easy society, with a deep belief in letting people go their own ways in all matters that can be left free-and-easy without opening the road to social brigandage or gangsterism, or interfering dangerously with the use of the social wealth for the promotion of the general happiness. I want individual freedom in enough different forms to meet the desires of very many different sorts of people, and to give them liberty to behave as they like and not merely as I should like them to like.

In addition to individual freedom, I want political or social freedom. I want the society in which I live to be self-governing in a very real and positive sense. I want as many of the citizens as can be induced to take an active part to share in the work of government and administration ; and I want the forms of government to be so devised as to encourage as many people as possible to take an interest in it and to make the voices of those who are interested as effective as possible in the shaping of public policy. I want to apply that principle not only to politics in the narrower sense, but to every kind of social activity that affects the common welfare. Especially do I want to see it applied to industry ; for I am sure that men and women who are condemned to spend the whole of their working lives blindly obeying orders run a grave risk of being made unfit thereby for playing an adequate part in political life. I am sure, too, that the way in which the work of production is organised and carried on profoundly affects people's happiness, and that the methods of production could be greatly improved from the human point of view, and work made far less boring and uncongenial than most of it now is, if the actual workers played a far larger

part in settling the conditions under which it should be done.

Finally I want freedom for the neighbourhood group in the collective management of its own affairs—freedom for the village, for the town or city—and even for the street or quarter within it—for the region and for the nation, as well as for the world as a whole. One freedom of this sort need by no means exclude another : a free Britain does not mean that Manchester must be enslaved, or effective world government mean slavery for each national group within the wider unity. I want to reconcile the freedoms of great and small societies, not only as between big and little nations but also as between local and national authorities within a single country.

Of course I am fully conscious that all these things I want can be realised only within limits. It is impossible to eliminate in practice all suffering that is avoidable in theory. It is impossible to give absolutely everyone a fair chance, or to frame a society that will give every citizen as much of what he wants as is theoretically compatible with the equal claims of all the rest. However we organise our social institutions, there will remain some intolerance of things that ought to be tolerated, some squeezing of square pegs into round holes, some failure of rulers and administrators, from lack of either will or understanding, to act as the trustees of human happiness. But we can at any rate set out to get as much of all these good things as we find possible. We can make the securing of them to the fullest possible extent the declared and recognised objective of our social policy.

It is the same with freedom as with opportunity or material welfare. Absolute freedom no individual, no group, and no nation can or should have in a world of all-pervading interdependence. Some people and some States and some groups want things so destructive to human well-being and happiness that they have to be stopped from

getting them. Many people want for themselves or their friends or their class things which are incompatible with the equal claims of other men or other classes. Wants of the first sort have to be repressed if the world is not to be torn in pieces by war ; and wants of the second sort have to be kept within bounds by ordered rules of social discipline and behaviour. But the more firmly we can establish in most men's minds codes of decent public and private conduct, so that violent or "ungentlemanly" behaviour instantly provokes strong disapproval, the less we shall need to resort to positive repressions, and the surer will be the foundations on which we can proceed to build up yet finer standards of social and personal conduct.

The freedom we have a right to claim ought to stop short at the point at which increased freedom for one man or one group or one nation involves a denial of the equal claims of other men or groups or nations to seek happiness and well-being in their own several ways. Of course it is often difficult in practice to say precisely where the line ought to be drawn ; but the higher the general code of behaviour by which men and nations consent to live, the less damage will be caused by infractions of it, and the better we shall be able to afford to let the transgressors get off scot free. The lower the code the greater is the need for punishment ; for the baser the violation the more harm it is likely to do. To a decent human society and to a decently ordered world, high standards of personal and public conduct are clearly indispensable.

High standards of conduct are, however, clearly incompatible with social systems which positively ordain their very opposite. As things are, men and nations are accounted greatest not when they most respect the equal claims of others, but when, within a very unexacting code of civilised behaviour, they can succeed in grabbing most for themselves. Nations are looked up to for expanding their

territories or annexing the lands of other peoples in order to create empires. Individuals are looked up to for their success in becoming rich : even poor men gain more respect by contriving to become less poor, or to cover up their poverty. There are, indeed, certain recognised limits which it is no longer respectable for either a nation or an individual to transgress in order to achieve power or riches ; but these rules of civilised conduct are by no means based on the principle of recognising the equal claims of others. They merely exclude certain sorts of conduct which have become so revolting to the sensibilities of civilised people as to be set beyond the pale ; and in the interest of nations excuses are readily found in times of war for breach even of the most elementary rules. Individual murder is sometimes condoned, but brutal murder is always condemned in civilised countries. But sheer brutality between nations is far more readily condoned even to-day. The nations have not even agreed to abolish poison gas or the bombing of civilians from the air ; and although standards of private conduct are some distance ahead of the standards recognised for States and Empires, it is still entirely respectable to form a monopoly in order to hold up the price of some common necessity of life, or to get the better of other people by stock exchange speculation based on inside knowledge, or to find lawful ways of evading taxation, or to buy anything you can in the cheapest and sell it in the dearest market.

Doubtless the world in which these things happen is prepared to extend a barren honour to its "saints"—that is, to people who persist in taking seriously the conflict between the Sunday-go-to-meeting moral code and the current precepts and practice of business as a working system. But, under the existing conditions, anyone who really attempts to import the ethics of Christianity into the conduct of his business affairs works under a heavy handicap. It is certainly no part of current business morality

to act on the principle that "It is more blessed to give than to receive." In practice, "devil take the hindmost" and *caveat emptor* square far better with what the business man is expected to live up to. Rotarians and business conventions doubtless often talk about the "spirit of service," and many business men have a strong feeling against making goods shoddier than convention prescribes, and a moral as well as a prudential objection to positive law-breaking. Against sheer undeniable dishonesty modern capitalism has thrown up defences that are reasonably strong, though they can be too often breached by a shady financial adventurer such as Hatry or Stavisky, or even Ivar Kreuger. But the very coupling of these three names is full of fruitful suggestion. Stavisky seems to have been an unmitigated swindler from start to finish ; but Hatry, I think, went off the rails only when he had got into difficulties by methods which are—but ought not to be—regarded as allowable and even meritorious instances of financial daring ; and Kreuger had a touch of real vision and imaginative genius, and might under not very different conditions have gone on record not as a scoundrel but as the outstanding post-war example of beneficent capitalist enterprise.

Hatry and Kreuger, but especially Kreuger, went wrong not because they were wholly bad men but because the tolerated privateering of modern high finance is a standing invitation to step across the line which separates the captain of industry from the gaol-bird. A system which deifies a successful grabber who grabs just within the rules invites him to go outside the rules as soon as he sees his position threatened. There is a legal line, but there can be no moral line, between ruining other people by using inside knowledge and financial power for rigging the stock market, and such forms of fraudulent misrepresentation as will bring you, if you are found out, within the clutches of the police. Stock-market speculation, as distinct from ordinary

brokerage, is at best sheer gambling ; and where it is more than gambling it is neither more nor less than an attempt to do the other fellow down.

A great many people will admit that this charge is valid against the speculator, and will yet strongly resent any suggestion that a similar charge can be brought against the business system as a whole. Moreover, many people will defend the speculator on the ground that he performs under current conditions a necessary though unpleasant and somewhat degrading function analogous to that of the public executioner or the slaughterman in a municipal abattoir. Most of us would turn vegetarian if we had to do our own killing, and hasten to abolish capital punishment if we had to take turns as executioners as well as jurors. But most of us do not turn vegetarian, or even agitate seriously against capital punishment, though both these attitudes involve expecting other people to do for us what we would by no means consent to do for ourselves. It is not very different with the stock exchange. If we want meat, somebody has to kill the beasts. If we want a free market for stocks and shares, stock-jobbers have to exist, as long as there remain a host of different types of security to be privately bought and sold. However evil the results of speculation may be, capitalism cannot afford to shut down its stock or produce exchanges. It must tolerate the gambler, and even leave the door open to the swindler, in order to ensure an open market for second-hand investments.

But does not this necessity to tolerate evil practices suggest that the root of the trouble lies much deeper down in the business system itself? Why do people invest? To make money. Why do *entrepreneurs* persuade them to invest? Because the *entrepreneurs* hope to make money. Why do capitalists carry on production at all? To make money. Why do professional men, managers, foremen, rank-and-file workers, labour day in and day out at making things,

carrying them about, or organising and directing the labours of others ? To make money. That is the assumption on which our entire system is based, for rich and for poor, for employer and for employee, for writer, artist, doctor, teacher, and civil servant, as well as for the great financier and for the unskilled labourer. Of course for some of these people money-making is not by any means the *only* motive. Some of them enjoy their jobs, and some desire power and the sense of power more than money. Some have the urge to creation within themselves, and some want to serve their fellow-men. But for almost all—for all except those who possess adequate incomes apart from their work—money has to be *a* motive ; and our economic system rests on the assumption that, by and large, it will be by far the most powerful motive of all.

And so it is. For if men make for themselves a system designed to appeal chiefly to the money-making motive, to that motive they will naturally get the greatest response. Money is, in the world of to-day, the means—the most obvious and universal means—to so many clearly desirable things—to material well-being, security, freedom, diversity of experience and enjoyment, choice of occupation, sense of success, power and influence over things and people. Of course most people work chiefly for money, when at the touch of money so many doors fly open. Of course it is better to be rich than poor—even if a case can be made out for a moderate fortune as being best of all. Most people fall so far short of that moderate fortune that money is bound to be much in their minds ; and of those who have reached moderate plenty the majority will desire more as long as the making of money is a means to higher consideration and ministers to the sense of achievement and success.

Not to desire more money, as matters stand, a man must be either too down-trodden or anaemic to feel the pressure of ordinary human wants, or possessed by some overpowering

impulsion towards some other definite end. The scholar who has enough for the successful pursuit of knowledge may value more knowledge much above more money. The inventor may care more for his invention than for the money reward which it brings. Even the great capitalist may value the exercise of his skill and strategy above the money which he makes by them. But these are essentially creative types ; and most men are not creators but mainly executants of other men's designs. There are also " saints " who make a passion out of service—from poor priests and almoners to " red " agitators and crusaders on behalf of the oppressed in every sphere. But most men are not saints, any more than they are creators. They are just ordinary people capable of modest initiative or of decent service, but without the passion and enthusiasm which are the monopolies of the creator and the saint.

Perhaps saint and creator are happiest. I do not pretend to know. Nor is the question relevant to my present purpose. For saint and creator, vastly important as they both are for the welfare of society, are, and will be always, only a few among many ; and we must make society even more for the many than for the few. The saints would not have us make it for them ; for their passion is to serve. Some of the creators would have society fashioned for their convenience ; but, when it is so fashioned, they are apt to turn and rend us common men. For creation is a force for evil as well as good. Society needs the creators, but it needs to canalise their work, guiding them into courses that will help to forward the cause of happiness and not offer up common men's welfare as a sacrifice to the caprice of genius. Society is to be made for everybody and not for the creators alone. The creator must be enrolled as its servant, with the fullest opportunity that can be offered him for fruitful service. Society lets him be master at its peril.

As things are, money-making is the career most open to

the creative mind in many of its forms. It can be argued that the predatory capitalist is at any rate less a public enemy than the robber baron, and that it is better for men to seek money by commerce than by rapine. So it is ; and capitalism stands for a stage in civilisation beyond feudal anarchy. But, as some creators have shown in all ages, neither prowess in money-making nor prowess in fighting is the best objective for the creative impulse. It is better to make things than money, and to make things for the sake of making them than for the sake of making money. It is best of all to enjoy making useful or beautiful things just because they are useful or beautiful, and therefore enjoyable to others besides their makers. We need a society that will give its creators the fullest opportunity of making useful and beautiful things, and will hold out to them the inducement that these things will be actually used and enjoyed to the fullest possible extent. It is of the first importance that society should give to its creators other tokens of esteem and achievement than the accumulation of riches.

It will, however, be admitted that most men are not creators in this sense. They have not and cannot have the joy in making useful or beautiful things that is the creator's privilege ; or at most they can have this joy only occasionally and as a rule apart from their regular work. Regular hard work is bound to have for them, as it need not have for the creators, a large element of what the economists call "disutility." No one really wants to work every day in a factory at a routine job on which he can impress no iota of his individuality. Yet it is in the nature of things that most work should be largely a matter of routine. Therefore, say the upholders of capitalism, you must have monetary inducements, incentives to labour for the mass of men, or the world's work will not get done. Most men cannot be expected to work for joy, and accordingly they must be induced to work for monetary rewards.

Of course there must be incentives to labour in any sort of society that is ever actually to exist upon earth. But need these incentives be monetary to anything like the extent to which they are so to-day? I doubt it. I do not dispute that men have got so accustomed to working for money that it would be sheer folly to attempt to discard monetary incentives all of a sudden; for men take time to change their habits, and the motives to which a social system appeals become rooted habits in the majority of men. We cannot do without incentives; and we cannot suddenly and completely transmute the habitual incentives into something different. Nor can we venture even to weaken the force of monetary incentives unless we can see our way to reinforcing, and then step by step replacing, them by other incentives no less powerful. But can we not at least make a beginning towards a change of appeal? It is not as if most men were mere money-grubbers at heart. They are not. But at present we give most of them very little chance of behaving as if they were anything else. They have to grub for money or starve or be looked down on as ne'er-do-wells, or sink in the social scale, or foster in their own minds a degrading sense of failure.

After all, when you consider the matter candidly, our present way of getting the world's work done is a pretty disgusting business. We no longer quite say to a man "Work, or you shall die of positive starvation." But we do hold over most men the perpetual fear of unemployment, of an old age penurious and burdensome to their children unless they have slaved to set aside money for their later years, and of privation for their dependants as well as for themselves if they fail to satisfy foreman or employer of their worth-whileness as employable persons. We offer them inducements to harder and better work in the form of higher money rewards. But we are hardly ever prepared to offer them security, which alone will give them peace of

mind, lest thereby we undermine their readiness to labour. We call ourselves a democracy ; but the last thing we are prepared to do is to trust one another to behave decently unless it is made worth each man's private while.

Some part of this mistrust is doubtless justified ; for if everyone were offered enough to live on comfortably, whether he worked or not, I do not deny that enough people would idle or slack to bring so utopian an experiment speedily to an end. But need we be nearly so distrustful as we are ? Suppose, on the average, men got only half their incomes as rewards for work, and the other half were accorded to them as a social right of citizenship. Suppose at the same time the very great incomes, "earned" as well as "unearned," were drastically lopped down, so as to decrease greatly, without wholly abolishing, economic inequality. Suppose unearned incomes, beyond the equal income given to each citizen as a right, were done away with altogether, and adequate public provision made instead for the comfort of the aged and those unable to work because of sickness and other infirmity. What do you suppose would happen ? Would an epidemic of malingering really set in, with hosts of people preferring life in idleness on their dole to doubling the amount of the dole by doing a reasonable day's work ?

I do not believe it. Some malingering there would be, especially at the beginning. But it would be mainly among the physically or mentally feeble, whose work is of no great value in any case. The vast majority of normal people, that is to say of "employables," would think it well worth while to take the chance of doubling their incomes by doing a fair day's work. They would think so all the more in a society in which large differences of income and status were no longer allowed to exist ; for in such a society comparatively small increments of income would provide fully as powerful incentives as far larger ones provide to-day.

But, it will be asked, what would have been gained by the change? Money incentives would still be operating, probably with no less power than at present. There would be no *moral* improvement. For there is no moral difference between working for £1 and working for £100.

Nevertheless a great deal would have been gained. In the first place, the minimum standard of security that is now denied to the great majority of people would have become the possession of all. The fear of starvation, and even of near-starvation, and the sense of degradation that goes with the appeal for relief in time of distress, would have been absolutely removed. Secondly, the removal of these things, and the express determination of society to guarantee the means of decent living to all, would have brought with them the possibility of an effective appeal to a quite new set of incentives to the doing of a fair day's work. It would have become the common interest of all to make the economic system as productive as possible; for growing productivity would be directly used to increase the size of the common social dividend. The incentive to produce would be no longer based chiefly on a desire to get as much as possible for oneself to the exclusion of others, but at least equally on a desire to increase the common store.

Can it be doubted that under these conditions there would very quickly grow up an overwhelmingly strong public sentiment in favour of decent economic behaviour? The slacker would be so clearly despoiling his neighbours and not merely himself; idleness would become a ground of reproach among friends and neighbours far more than it is to-day. A fair day's work would come to be recognised as a social obligation binding upon all healthy and normal persons. That "team spirit" which capitalist employers are always expressing the desire to evoke, but only Soviet Russia has so far succeeded in evoking on the grand scale,

would speedily permeate society and become as deeply rooted as the money motive is to-day.

This, be it observed, could come to pass without lessening the force of the money motive as long as it was still needed. It is possible that after a time the money motive might begin to atrophy, driven out of use by the force of the new incentives to social effort. But it would decay only if and when it was no longer required, because the world's work could get done without it. Even while it remained in full force, there would be beside it the new motives to deprive it of many of its evil effects ; and the total drive towards the achievement of plenty would be far more powerful than it is now, for scarcity would be in no one's interest and higher production clearly in the interests of all.

Theoretically, a new system of production on these lines could be introduced without altering the capitalist basis of society. The State could levy upon industry a heavy tax sufficient to supply the guaranteed income to all (or in the alternative could create enough additional money to provide the requisite incomes). Under either system, the incomes received by capitalists and workers as rewards for the use of the factors of production would have to fall to such a level as would suffice, together with the social dividend, to purchase the entire current product of industry. In technical language, the imposition of the tax would lower the "net marginal productivity" of land, capital and labour to whatever extent might be required to bring this new equilibrium about. For the total incomes distributed both as rewards for the use of land, capital and labour and as social dividends could not under any circumstances avail to buy more than the total product ; and the movement of market prices would speedily secure the new adjustment between supply and demand which the new distribution of incomes would involve.

Theoretically, then, the change could be made under

capitalism. Practically, it could not; for with the suggested limitations on the predominance of the money incentive, the defences of capitalism would be down. Given a common interest in maximum production, the people would be in no mood to tolerate any form of scarcity-mongering or monopoly. Having recognised the claim of all citizens to a fair share in the product of industry, they would speedily go on to bring the instruments and processes of production under their common control.

Capitalism thrives on inequality, and any force that makes for greater economic equality is bound to lessen its power. Even such changes as have occurred in the final distribution of incomes in recent years have reduced capitalist authority and increased the force of the Socialist challenge. It has often been contended that, in advanced capitalist countries, the distribution of incomes (apart from redistribution through taxation) tends to follow a "Pareto line." This means that the frequency of the distribution tends to follow a straight line, so that the existence of large fortunes at one end of the scale is the correlative of poverty at the other end and, the number of incomes round about any two levels being known, it will be possible to say how many incomes there are at any other level. There are, in Pareto's view, no sharp breaks in the distribution of incomes—the more people there are receiving £2 or £5 a week, the more there will be receiving £100 or £1,000, the number of incomes growing steadily less as each higher level is reached. Clearly this supposed law cannot apply below a certain minimum level necessary for subsistence; but above that level it is widely held to apply to a very considerable extent in advanced capitalist societies over the entire range of middle- and upper-class incomes.<sup>1</sup> It does not, however, appear to hold good for the incomes of the main body of the working class, whose average income level to-day is higher, at any rate in Great Britain,

than it would be if the Pareto rule were in operation.<sup>1</sup>

Arguments in defence of the capitalist system have often been based on the Pareto line. It has been suggested that the only way of making the poor richer is to enrich the wealthy, because, as the number of the very rich increases, all the grades below will rise correspondingly down to the minimum subsistence level, which will itself tend to be advanced with the increase in the higher incomes. I see no reason for disputing that under an advancing capitalist system this contention is broadly true ; for the same forces as increase profits are under such a system likely to increase other incomes as well by raising the marginal productivity of all the factors of production at once. Capitalists can afford to pay most in wages when they are most prosperous ; and in an advancing capitalist system, strong enough to meet foreign competition without fear, they are most prosperous when they pay the highest wages all round, and thus create the largest market for their products.

But no valid defence of capitalism can be based on this argument ; for it is simply an account of what happens under capitalism when it is in a prosperous and progressive phase, and does not compare capitalism with any alternative system, or cover the case of capitalism in decline. If it indicates anything, what it shows is that capitalism necessarily involves gross economic inequality and is unworkable without such inequality. But such a contention makes not on the side of capitalism but very much against it.

This can be seen very clearly if we glance at the figures of

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Colin Clark, *The National Income*, p. 75. The diagram there given broadly bears out Pareto's contention as applying in Great Britain to incomes above £5 a week. But Mr. Clark also shows that the number of incomes below £5 is much greater than it should be under the Pareto rule, until a level of under £3 is reached, when the number becomes less than it should be under the rule. In other words, too many people get from £3-£5 a week, and too few under £3 to fit the Pareto line. These figures, however, refer to 1928—that is, to the distribution of incomes before the present slump.

the distribution of incomes in the two greatest capitalist countries as they were in the period immediately before the depression of the past few years. In Great Britain in 1928, out of about twenty million incomes, nearly three-quarters were over £3 a week, but over eighteen millions were under £5. These figures apply to all receivers of incomes and not only to heads of families ; but they exclude about a million and a half persons who were then unemployed. At the other extreme there were about two thousand persons with incomes of more than £25,000 a year, about ten thousand with incomes above £10,000, about thirty thousand with more than £5,000, and over 104 thousand with more than £2,000 a year. Figures for incomes levels between £2,000 and £250 are unfortunately not available.

In the United States, which was in 1929 unquestionably the richest country in the world, 18 per cent of those in receipt of personal incomes got less than \$800 a year, 43½ per cent less than \$1,200, and about two-thirds less than \$1,600. About 5½ per cent got over \$4,000, about 2 per cent over \$8,000, and about one-half per cent over \$20,000. As between States, average income per head was about \$1,200 in New York and \$1,019 in California, whereas it was only \$258 in South Carolina, where there is a large negro and "poor white" population, and only \$412 in South Dakota, which is a purely "white" farming State. About 27,000 people had more than \$100,000 a year, and about 96,000 more than \$50,000, whereas about 32,000,000 had less than \$1,500, nearly 20,000,000 under \$1,000, and between 5,000,000 and 6,000,000 under \$500. These statistics refer to recipients of personal incomes, and do not include their dependents.

These figures, familiar as their general purport is, need to be quoted again and again in order to bring home to men's minds the gross inequalities of income which capitalism involves. It is true enough that, if the incomes of the rich

could be taken away and redistributed among the poor, poverty would still remain ; for the average income per family in Great Britain, taking rich and poor together, was in 1928 only about £6 a week. But in terms of well-being and happiness, the gap between £3 and £6 a week is very much greater than the gap between £6 and £600, and the gap between 30s. and £3 is greater still. If we are sincere in desiring the greatest happiness of the greatest number, there is a clear case for drastic redistribution of incomes on a far less unequal basis. This case would be unanswerable even if it meant no more than sharing out the existing product of industry in a more equitable way. It can, however, mean far more than that, in view of the gross under-use which we are making, and were making even before the slump, of the productive resources that lie ready to our hands. I have no wish to draw fancy pictures of the increase in production that could be achieved merely by making full use of our available man-power and technical resources. But, at a conservative estimate, can anyone doubt that we could, if we were all trying our best, raise output within a brief space of time by at least a third above the level of to-day ? I will not argue the point now in any detail, because I have argued it at some length elsewhere<sup>1</sup>; but it is surely clear that with unemployment at roughly 17 per cent, with capital resources and land used far below their full capacity, and with many technical processes unexploited or under-exploited for lack of a market, this can be regarded as a modest forecast of the results of a policy which made plenty instead of scarcity its aim. Production is limited to-day not by lack of capacity to produce but by lack of a profitable market. Make the motive behind production no longer profit but the satisfaction of

<sup>1</sup> See the essay "Our Unused Wealth" in my *Studies in World Economics*, and Chapter IX and Appendix in my *Principles of Economic Planning*.

human needs and desires, and what marvellous advances in productivity shall we not be able speedily to achieve ?

Of course there are difficulties. Human needs and desires do not expand at an equal rate for goods of different sorts : nor is there any close correspondence between the goods we could most easily produce in far greater abundance and the goods that would be most in demand as incomes rose. In order to achieve the full benefits of a policy of plenty, we should have to adapt and reconstruct our productive system to a considerable extent ; and while these changes were being made the consumers could not reap the full advantage of the advance in total production. The Russians, in order to build up productivity at an unprecedentedly rapid pace, have had to set aside for the time being a far larger part of their available resources than any capitalist society has ever set aside for the production of capital goods —thus incidentally giving the lie direct to the ancient anti-Socialist contention that a Socialist system would be bound to fail for lack of adequate capital accumulation.

We, too, in our march towards equality, shall need to pass through a period of active industrial re-equipment and rapid accumulation of capital before we can reap the full benefit of the new economic system. But, luckily for us, our problem is not like the Russians'. They had to set to work under enormous disadvantages, boycotted and blockaded by the anti-Socialist world, building up an advanced economic system almost from nothing, and in face of a terrible shortage of technical, manual, and managerial skill. We can set out with an industrial system already highly equipped and needing only secondary changes of structure, with an abundance of skilled workers, technicians and experienced administrators, and from a *relatively* high standard of living. We shall have no cause to tighten our belts as the Russians have done. Our need for industrial re-equipment will only slow down for a few years the

advance in the standard of living : there is no reason why it should involve even a momentary setback to consumption.

Our task is easy—easy in a technical sense—in comparison with the Russians'. Its difficulties are not technical but rather psychological. Our people have grown so used to living under capitalism that they find it hard to believe in the existence of any practicable alternative. Nor are most people at present, under British conditions, so wretchedly poor as to feel that nothing at all can be worse than their existing lot. British industrialism is one of the world's wealthiest examples of capitalism ; and, as we have seen, some share in the rapidly advancing national wealth has been passed on to the poorer classes. Moreover, Great Britain has so far escaped the worst effects of the world depression, largely because her vast investments abroad have enabled her to buy the products of an impoverished world at very low prices, and so to maintain the standard of living for the employed workers, and even to provide better for the unemployed than other capitalist countries. These conditions make men hard to convince that capitalism ought to be superseded, and disposed to acquiesce in a poverty which is less abject than they know to exist in most of the neighbouring countries. At the most, they incline in the mass only towards a gradualist and unambitious semi-Socialism which, from its very lack of ambition, fails to arouse the generous enthusiasm which is necessary for the making of a great change. Great Britain is likely to try "gradualism" before she becomes ready to embark on more far-reaching adventures, unless in the near future the process of capitalist decline hits her far harder than it has done hitherto. If war can be averted, there is no reason why that should happen for some time yet ; but if another war comes the day of gradualism will be over, and this country, like others, will find itself faced with a stark choice between Socialism and Fascist enslavement.

## CHAPTER VI

### NATIONALISM AND WAR

SOCIALISTS are often accused of wanting to make the State all-powerful over the lives of men. But in fact desire for the omnipotent State exists not among Socialists but among their bitterest enemies. Not Socialists but Fascists uphold the ideal of the "totalitarian" national State, which is to bend all its citizens to serve its transcendent purposes. Not Socialists but Fascists worship State-might, and exalt this might into a sort of "right" that stands above all ordinary morality. The State of the Socialists is neither Leviathan nor Juggernaut. It is to exist for men and women, not they for the State. Whereas Hegelians and Fascists, militarists and nationalist idealogues, make of the Nation-State an end in itself, to whose greatness all men and women are but means, for the Socialist the State is itself no more than a means—a means to human happiness, which is essentially an individual thing.

At any rate, that is what Socialists would have the State be, though of course they are very far from holding that actual States can be correctly described in these terms. States as they exist to-day for the most part still carry about them many of the trappings of feudalism and of the monarchical absolutism which succeeded feudalism at the end of the Middle Ages. Modern States are still in part the great estates of monarchs; and even where the monarchy has disappeared, the idea survives. Absolute monarchists regarded the kingdom as a possession in the monarch's hand. He might be responsible to God for his stewardship,

but to no one else. Certainly he was not regarded as responsible to his fellow monarchs or to other States ; for Absolutism recognised nothing beyond the King—no comity of Christendom such as the Middle Ages half believed in as an inheritance from the Roman Empire. It was a case of each King, and therewith of each State, for himself, and Heaven help the weak.

As Machiavelli's *Prince* plainly shows, there were solid reasons behind this attempt to make King and State absolute and irresponsible in relation both to their subjects and to the world outside. In an age of continual insecurity, men craved for a strong hand over them to keep them safe from external aggression and lawlessness within. They were prepared to rest content if they could but exchange many oppressors for a single oppressor to whose interest it would be to keep them secure except against himself. The veneration for the strong National State developed in men's minds at a time when the creation of strong National States seemed to offer them the best hope of security. It embodied itself in a national patriotism and a national veneration for monarchy that were unknown in Medieval Christendom.

Ideas once rooted in men's consciousness die hard. In time, indeed, the subjects—especially the richer and more influential subjects—turned against bad kings and drove them out. But this did not happen until the solidarity of the national group seemed to have been so firmly established as to be assured of survival without the need for a hereditary monarch to serve as its symbol. Nor did it happen everywhere. For in many countries Kings, shorn of absolute power, remain to-day as symbols of national unity, and some of the less homogeneous States have veered back towards absolute Monarchy as a means of securing national unity. Moreover, even where Monarchy gave place to Republic, men were careful to equip their reformed States with Presidents, in lieu of Kings, lest the

sense of unity should fail in a society which had found no means of embodying the idea of it in a single person. In the new business organisations which modern man has created for the conduct of industry and commerce, in the Non-conformist Churches, and in countless other forms of social organisation, preference has on the whole been given to collegiate or corporate forms of government. But in the State, even where the reality has become corporate, as in Great Britain as well as France, men have clung tenaciously to the symbolism of a personal ruler. America, curiously enough, has preserved in her Republic the reality as well as the symbolism of personal leadership. The American President counts for more than Congress or Cabinet ; and, by an interesting parallelism, in the American business corporation the President is of far more account than the Chairman of the Board of Directors in a British joint stock company.

This "monarchist" spirit surviving powerfully in modern States, whether they are nominally Monarchies or Republics, is of great influence in making men continue to think of the State as an end in itself, instead of regarding it merely as a means to the promotion of happiness and welfare. Men still want the State of which they are subjects to be "great," apart from any effect which its greatness may have on the well-being of its members. They still regard other States as potential menaces to their State, as well as to themselves—as indeed every great State must be to other States, great or small, as long as its citizens continue to regard it in this way. Men still cluster round their State in times of danger and feel more patriotic as they feel more afraid.

As long as each great State is Leviathan to its own subjects, it will continue to be Juggernaut to the subjects of other States. There is no way of breaking down aggressive nationalism save by driving the idea of absolute nationalism

out of people's minds. But ideas cannot without disaster be driven out in such a manner as to create a void ; for if a void be left in the minds of men, there speedily rush into it seven devils worse than the first. Merely to denounce State nationalism without seeking to replace it is to invite its recurrence in even more aggressive and neurotic forms. The history of the past few years abounds in illustrations of this truth. Let us be content with one. The Weimar Republic drove out the Hohenzollerns and left a void. Hitler and Goering and Goebbels rushed in to fill the empty space.

What idea, then, is strong enough to replace as well as to drive out that form of nationalism which looks upon the State as absolute and beyond all moral law ? Clearly nothing will achieve this short of the idea of human fraternity spreading beyond the boundaries of the individual nations over the whole world. But no idea will suffice unless it comes to men armed with the promise of giving them security. The nation won their reverence by promising them order within and protection against the foreigner. Internationalism will strike roots in men's imagination and enlist their loyalty only if it can offer them a wider protection.

In advanced modern countries internal order is for the most part taken largely as a matter of course—above all in Great Britain, the most law-abiding and internally secure of all the great nations. When this security comes to be taken almost for granted, men cease to set upon it a valuation that leads to reverence. Their view of it becomes utilitarian, and they become far readier to criticise it where it makes against their personal interests or desires. In Great Britain men no longer reverence the State in its capacity of policeman ; and in normal times they are not unready to protest in the name of personal liberty against abuses of the police power. On the other hand, security

against external aggression can by no means be taken for granted in a world of independent Sovereign States acknowledging no common overlord ; and accordingly the national State in its relation to other States still retains their reverence, called " patriotism," and can rally most of them behind its banner as soon as the war drums begin to beat.

If this were the end of the matter, there would be no hope of shaking the sentiment of nationalist absolutism in the minds of the majority of men. But it is not the end. National States confronting one another in arms, each fearing the others' aggression and each seeking to appropriate to itself a larger share of the world's spoils than its neighbours, are not means to the protection and security of their citizens, but on the contrary expose them to constant and ever-increasing dangers. Modern wars engulf whole populations. Modern armies are *levées en masse* of the national manpower ; and the conquest of the air has brought every man, woman, and child within the range of massacre. There is no defence, only retaliation, against aerial warfare. The strongest State cannot protect its subjects, but only bid them endure for the sake of national glory and in the hope of national revenge.

Under these conditions the time has come for men in search of protection to rally round a new idea, even as, centuries ago, their ancestors rallied round the idea of the nation. In the name of world security they must outlaw war if they would make themselves and their children safe. But no merely declaratory Kellogg Pact, solemnly recited in the same breath with a re-affirmation of national sovereignty ; no League of Nations that is a mere meeting place for the delegates of sovereign States ; and equally no mere preaching of international sentiment, however well intentioned, can offer men the security of which they are in search. The National State won their loyalty because

it was, as it still is, a concrete embodiment of power: No less must the world idea that is to replace its hold upon men by another and more inclusive appeal take form and substance in a powerful and concrete institution capable of affording protection.

But how in a world of States, which hold among them the monopoly of armed power, are men to create a new institution powerful enough to challenge these mighty ones and to bring them to submission? The task before us is indeed difficult, and we shall never get it done if we approach it without a preparedness to give up for its sake many of our most deeply-rooted prejudices. But let us not forget that there was a time when those who set to work to destroy feudal anarchy and to establish in its place the National State as the instrument of order and security also seemed to be facing a hopeless task. You will find in Machiavelli's challenging brutality of language ample evidence of the immense odds he felt that the new idea had to face. Yet the National State triumphed, not because Machiavelli desired it, but because men were able to find concrete and powerful instruments for its realisation.

If in the changed conditions of to-day we are setting out to achieve a wider international unity, we shall have to work for this unity, not only by the provision and propaganda of international ideas but also by finding for these ideas some positive rallying point in a concrete human institution in which they can be at least in part embodied. Socialists have for a long time past sought this embodiment in the organised power of the working-class movement. "Workers of all countries, unite," wrote Marx in the Communist Manifesto of 1848; and the new Communist Manifesto of 1917 repeated the same slogan. Marx created the International Working Men's Association of 1864 to embody his cosmopolitan gospel in the working-class movement; and when, after the break up of the First International,

Social Democracy was becoming a parliamentary power, Marx's disciples created the Second International. The First International fell to pieces, torn asunder by internal disputes, after the defeat of the Paris Commune in 1871 ; the Second International expired in 1914 without striking a blow. Thereafter the paths divided. The Bolsheviks created the Third, or Communist, International, while the Social Democrats revived the Second International in the shape of the Labour and Socialist International of to-day.

All these bodies have possessed internationalist aspirations, but not one of them has been able in fact to transcend the limitations of a world divided up among national States each claiming absolute sovereignty. The First International came nearest because it was the most inchoate and most a matter of the adherence of individuals rather than of organised national parties. The Second and its successor, the Labour and Socialist International, have again and again revealed the weaknesses inherent in a federal body composed of national groups each trying to work out its policy within the peculiar limiting conditions of a single country, so that each has to shape its programmes and methods to suit national rather than international needs. The Third International, far more cosmopolitan in its theoretical outlook, has been perforce mainly the agent of the Socialism of that one country in which Socialists have successfully achieved full political power ; and it has for this reason failed to meet the needs of Socialists in other countries where conditions and opportunities are widely different.

In fact, the attempt to base practical internationalism upon the world-wide class struggle of the workers against capitalism has so far failed. It has, however, helped to create in one country a Socialist State, or at least a State advancing towards Socialism under the control of Socialists as rapidly as its economic and social backwardness will

allow. The existence of this one Socialist State is a concrete fact—the one concrete fact so far that gives Socialist internationalism solid foundations on which it can begin to build.

But one Socialist State isolated in a world of capitalism can by no means afford to be one hundred per cent socialistic in its behaviour. The U.S.S.R., as long as it was boycotted by the capitalist world, had to make the best of its difficulties by using all its influence for stirring up trouble within the frontiers of other States and thereby lessening their power to do it harm. It was able to do this the more effectively because of its remoteness, and because the capitalist States were neither united among themselves nor ready to plunge again into serious warfare so soon after the Great War. When, however, neurotic nationalism emerged triumphant in Germany from the dismal repressions of the Versailles Treaty and the Weimar Republic, and when the danger of renewed war between the great capitalist Powers again seemed imminent, the Communists of Russia were compelled to change their tune and to seek allies among the more pacific and democratic of the capitalist countries in order to protect themselves against the more violently aggressive and discontented capitalist States. Socialist Russia became the ally of capitalist France : the U.S.S.R. entered the League of Nations, which for years past her leaders had reviled as a capitalist conspiracy against the working class. Loyal Communists in all the parliamentary countries found themselves under the unpleasant necessity of eating their words, of postponing their crusade for world-wide revolution, and, instead, of working immediately for the preservation of peace and the *status quo* in Europe lest the revival of nationalist fury should bring with it world repression with world-wide Fascism as its instrument, and therewith a new world war that might wreck the hopes of Socialism in Russia, and even threaten to sweep the Socialist revolution away.

Inevitably these are trying times for the well-meaning foreign friends of the Soviet Union, and it is easy to cast stones at the Bolsheviks and to denounce them as apostates from the true Socialist faith. But in reality, though Soviet Russia is the one invaluable embodiment in practical form of the idea of international Socialism, the Soviet State is not nearly powerful enough to stand alone, or to embody single-handed the sentiment of cosmopolitan solidarity for all the peoples. Weak and often hypocritical as the League of Nations has shown itself to be, the U.S.S.R. must, under present conditions, work through the League. It must seek allies, even if they be dangerous and untrustworthy, among the capitalist States which are least unresponsive to democratic influences and most likely to help in preserving the peace. Realising that it is too weak and too remote both geographically and ideologically from the West to become the sufficient embodiment of the idea of cosmopolitan security for the western peoples, it has to adapt its methods to collaboration with capitalist Governments on those issues over which joint action is possible for the time. It can afford to do this to the extent to which it can be done without sacrificing Socialism in Russia itself. Indeed, it must do this if it is to contribute to the creation for Socialists in all countries of an effective rallying-point for the idea of internationalism.

This adaptation, however, cannot be easily achieved. Changes of policy, founded on a realistic appreciation of changing conditions, are always apt to bewilder the faithful and to lead to recriminations among the fanatics and the doctrinaires. Moreover, when you have for years been denouncing a man as a "social traitor," it is not easy for him to accept from you, or for you to offer, the sudden hand of friendship. It is even a good deal easier to make friends with class-enemies than with those whom you have been passionately denouncing as the false friends of the working class. Stalin

finds it easier to achieve a rapprochement with M. Laval, or even Sir John Simon, than with Arthur Henderson or Léon Blum. Sometimes the rift within the working-class movement seems even deeper than the rift between the Russian Communists and the *Comité des Forges*.

In part this is because in Russia the Communists are a Government, undisputed rulers of a mighty State possessing great military power. Governments understand one another's language, whatever the ideas behind it; but between Governments and mere propagandist movements, whatever may be their unity of ideas, there is a great gulf fixed. Stalin rules Russia: the Labour Party does not rule Great Britain or the Socialist Party France. Nevertheless, in France events have forced upon Socialists and Communists a *front commun*<sup>1</sup>; and if there has been no corresponding development in Great Britain, two reasons explain its absence—the extreme weakness of British Communism and the absence of a sense of peril nearly so imminent as exists in the French Republic.

The dispute between Communists and Socialists, which has existed in every western country since 1917, is under present conditions sheerly calamitous. Even in France, where the quarrel has been half healed for the moment, it may break out again at any time. In Germany disunity caused the working-class movement to go down before the Nazis, without striking a single blow in self-defence. Even in Great Britain, where the quarrel counts for little directly, it dissipates effort and relaxes the generous enthusiasm of youth. But merely talking—or the formation of “united fronts” based on compromising phrases—will not heal the breach. Nothing will heal it, short of a plain recognition by the Russians that Western Europe means to try for Socialism by the constitutional way, until and unless that

<sup>1</sup> Now amplified into a *front populaire* by the inclusion of the left-wing Radical groups.

way is decisively barred by the institution of capitalist dictatorship ; and, on the other hand, a recognition in western countries that Russia is the one possible rallying point for the struggle to achieve internationalism, and that to pick quarrels with Communism now is to condemn the entire internationalist movement to sterility and to invite a speedy recurrence of world-wide war.

The League of Nations is a feeble thing. But Socialist Russia is in it ; and weak as it is it has rallied behind it an immense mass of muddled and inchoate pacifist and internationalist sentiment in this and other countries. On these two facts it is indispensable to build, by using the League as a means of working out plans of collective security, and never ceasing for an instant to push the League Powers in the direction of any plan that offers promise of lessening the immediate danger of war, of limiting the atrocity of actual warfare, of securing any sort of quantitative or qualitative restriction of armaments, or of promoting international co-operation and *commerce*, in the French sense, in any and every sphere. However unproductive all the talk about disarmament may seem to be, it is better to go on talking than to give up the attempt. For even if no actual disarmament is achieved, something may yet be done to disarm men's minds of their nationalistic exclusiveness and to make them ready to contemplate more decisive advances in the direction of a world unity that will transcend the limits of merely national sovereignty.

There are times when men should cease talking in order to act. But there are also times when talk is the most useful action that is open to them. Even mere talking is not contemptible when it sows the seeds of future action. But the condition on which it is worth while to go on talking internationally, in a world not yet ripe for international action, is that men should at the same time act fruitfully within the limited field within which the possibility of

effective action is at present open. To act with decision nationally but not nationalistically—that is the task facing Socialists throughout the world to-day, the sole means of proving to the world the good faith of their cosmopolitan intentions. To win power nationally, and not to abuse it. To collaborate with non-Socialists where collaboration can be used to further Socialism, peace, and world unity ; and to do this without surrender of Socialism. To be realistic, without degenerating into opportunism. To be patient, without losing faith. To be ready to make friends, without sacrifice of principles. To be broad-minded, without being open-minded ; to be steadfast, without being pig-headed. These are the immediate tasks of Socialists in a world racked by capitalist crisis and menaced afresh by nationalist and imperialist wars. To behave in this way is not easy : nothing worth while ever is. But Socialism as an internationalist creed is inspiring enough to give men strength to move mountains—or even molehills, which are often far worse stumbling-blocks to the “heavenly footman,” with his head in the air and his feet perforce upon the solid ground.

If I knew precisely how the idea of international Socialism—the one idea potentially big enough to overcome fear-nurtured nationalism and the worship of the sovereign State—could become flesh and embody itself in an institution with which we Socialists could identify ourselves without qualm or reservation, how gladly should I announce my discovery ! But I do now know : I can only surmise. That in this embodiment of the international idea the great fact of Socialist Russia must be recognised as central and dominant I am certain. But for making it so effectively the word is largely with the Russians. They, more than anyone else, are in a position to call the tune to which we must all dance. Yet they cannot call the tune without our help. For it needs violins and flutes and oboes as well as the big drum

and the loud bassoon. We have all our parts to play, and—for here the simile fails—we must all help to write the music. Stalin's Ninth Symphony will not serve the world's turn : the music of the nations has to be compounded of many national airs.

One thing clear is that, as matters stand to-day, the only sensible course is to play for time. We want time for the Socialist system in Russia to consolidate itself, to shake off the neuroses of the long revolutionary struggle and to settle down to give the world a plain demonstration of the benefits of Socialism in action. We want time for the fever of nationalism in Germany to become less and for economic difficulties to check rearmament and create a new movement among the exploited. We want time for France to reshape her political system and to achieve some measure of economic recovery. And in Great Britain we want time for the Labour Party to win a clear majority and show what it can do to achieve an evolutionary advance in the direction of Socialism. Even if we were to regard a renewal of world war as inevitable sooner or later, there would be the strongest practical reasons for putting off its coming for as long as we could. But I do not regard world war as inevitable. It is only too likely ; but between the probable and the inevitable there is in human affairs a distinction which makes practically a vital difference.

Of course it can be argued on the other side that Socialists ought actually to want another world war as the surest means of dissolving capitalism into chaos, and so making the road clear for the advent of Socialism. The last war gave the Bolsheviks their chance and created Socialism in Russia. Does not the best chance of overthrowing capitalism in the rest of the world lie in getting it first thoroughly disrupted for us by internecine war ? This argument has some plausibility. A new world war *might* lead to world Socialism built on the grave of the capitalist system. But for how many

alternative and far less desirable outcomes might it not prepare the way ? Might it not, for example, lead to sheer dissolution and decay of western civilisation, so as to leave a Balkanised Europe of petty dictators grubbing among the ruins of past greatness ? Or might it not end in an inconclusive truce between the Great Powers, which would thereupon resume preparations for the next war, and then for the next after that ? Might it not open the way to the rise of a formidable militaristic empire under Japanese leadership, dominant throughout the Far and Middle East and threatening to provoke a further world struggle between the combined armaments of the East and the West ? Anyone who gambles in world war for the sake of Socialism takes a prodigious risk of wrecking Socialism and western civilisation together, even if no account is to be taken of the oceans of blood through which alone a war-born Socialism could hope to swim to power.

No ; peace is the right policy, for as long as we can preserve it by any means within our power. It is the right policy morally, and it is also the only sensible policy even for those who hold that the end can justify any means. Peace is " worth a Mass " ; and the Russians are not wrong in their willingness to offer up sacrifices for it on the altar of a capitalist League of Nations. But in working for peace, or at the least for time, we Socialists can by no means afford to rest content with mere negations. We must also set to work to strengthen international Socialism as a force making for peace, and powerful enough to cause the warmongers to think twice before they plunge the world again into war.

This is not easy either. Let us face facts. Socialism as an organised movement barely exists in Japan, which is one of the potential war-makers. It has been extinguished in Germany, which is the other chief source of danger ; and in Italy, which cannot be protagonist in a world war but is

ready to provoke one if Mussolini can see a chance of national profit. Socialism is very weak and half-suppressed in Poland and throughout the Balkan countries. It has suffered severe defeat in Spain and in Austria ; but in both these countries the Socialist movement remains vigorously alive. In the United States, Socialism is not yet formidable as a political force, though it is gradually gaining ground. For present international purposes the strength of Socialism is practically confined to Russia, Great Britain, France, Scandinavia, Belgium, Holland and Switzerland—or, in other words, to countries which, in the event of a world war, would probably be either neutral or on the same side. In these circumstances it is merely futile to play with the idea of preventing war by means of a General Strike. Even if the organised workers in all these countries could be induced to join in a General Strike against the threatened war, what would be the effect of their action ? If the strike were to any considerable extent effective, it would ensure Italy's adhesion to the German side, make a German victory highly probable, clear the Far East for Japan, and in all probability in the long run extinguish the Socialist movement in both France and Great Britain, at any rate for a considerable time. But of course the whole supposition is fantastic. The General Strike against war is inconceivable in Russia ; and it is absurd to suppose that it could happen in Great Britain if Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy were the prospective enemies and Russia and France the prospective allies of the British Government. Under present conditions, talk of a General Strike against a threatened European war is mere fantasy, at any rate as far as any great war is concerned. No one really believes in it : it is only urged by bewildered Socialists who feel that they are called upon to say something and cannot think of anything else that sounds “ class-warish ” to say.

The question here at issue is not whether people ought in

an absolute moral sense to refuse to take part in any war, and accordingly to strike against the threat of war, but whether there is in fact the faintest chance, in face of the existing conditions in Europe, of a General Strike against war actually commanding popular support. Pure pacifism is essentially an individual sentiment and belief ; and no one, I think, is likely to argue that pure pacifism in this sense yet commands the support of more than an insignificant fraction of the population in any country. Clearly a General Strike, if it is to succeed to any appreciable extent, must secure the support of a vast mass of workers who take part in it not on pacifist grounds in the strict sense, but on political grounds as well. As soon as the appeal has to be made to a mass of people who believe not that all war is absolutely wrong, but that war can, under certain circumstances, be right, it becomes a highly relevant point that all the potential strikers against war are on one side, which is also the side most favourable to Socialism, whereas on the side most determinedly opposed to Socialism there are practically no potential strikers at all. Under these circumstances, for the vast majority of people, the political considerations are bound to outweigh the ethical ; and even if the leaders of the Socialist movement in any country wished to make a strike against war they could lead their followers into it only on false pretences, or by appealing to a loyalty which would not coincide with any assured belief in the rightness of the leadership. Moreover, in any strike movement the actual call would have to come, not from the Socialists as such, but from the trade unions ; and I find it quite impossible to believe that in the circumstances which I am now considering the trade unions in Great Britain or France could possibly be induced to issue a solid call for a General Strike against war.

If war were to come, with Nazi Germany and probably Poland on one side, with Japan playing her own hand in the

East, with Italy doubtful, and with Russia, France and Great Britain allied on the other side, I feel no doubt that the main mass of the workers in both France and Great Britain would support their national Governments, whatever the complexion of those Governments might be. Surely to suppose anything else is to be blind to plain facts. Nor, except for out-and-out pacifists, who would refuse to fight in any war, even a war waged directly for Socialism, is any other policy capable of being sustained on rational grounds. If war did come between such opposing forces as are here envisaged, it would be clearly better for the world that the Fascist and militarist Powers should go down before the Socialist Power and its parliamentarist allies. In 1914 it was possible to argue that the best outcome would be stalemate ; for then the Socialist forces were fairly evenly divided between the two sides. But in the new war which is now threatening, how can any Socialist help wanting to see Fascism beaten ?

We have to shape our policy in the light of these conditions ; and it is not easy to shape. There are some who pin their faith to underground Socialist propaganda helped from abroad as a means of recreating within Germany and Italy powerful Socialist movements on the old lines. But if any chance of this exists, it is clearly a chance far more for Communism than for Social Democracy. A movement that is totally suppressed by law is bound to assume a revolutionary form. Underground Socialism in Germany or Italy may take shape in a "united front" of all the Socialists. But such help as it can get from abroad can come far more easily from Communism than from Social Democracy ; and within these countries its strategy and method of action are bound to be far more closely akin to Communism than to Social Democracy. I doubt, however, whether Communism can at present be of much effect in recreating German or Italian Socialism. The Russians in these days

have to walk warily in the matter of foreign propaganda, for fear of precipitating the war which they are above all countries anxious to prevent. Moreover, the drive towards Socialist revival in Fascist countries will have to come mainly from within. The old leaders working from abroad are for the most part too discredited in the popular mind to be effective rallying points for a new movement ; nor can they, from their exile, usually achieve a sufficient understanding of new trends arising within the country. There must arise, in face of the dictatorship, new leaders inside the country itself, and their leadership will have to take forms appropriate to the internal circumstances and the opportunities which they present.

It is impossible at present to foster this new leadership from abroad, or even to foresee what forms it will take. It can hardly arise in any recognisable shape until the internal difficulties of the Fascist régimes have become even greater than they already are and grown far harder to cover up from view. The "days of June" in Germany showed how ruthless the Nazi camarilla is prepared to be in the suppression of any left-wing tendencies which show their head within the régime itself ; and we have to recognise in these days that ruthless suppression, competently and consistently practised, is an exceedingly powerful weapon against even widespread discontent. As long as Mussolini and Hitler can somehow keep most of the workers employed and fed, even at a very low standard of living, and can maintain the solidarity and efficiency of their own government machines, there is not much chance of the growth of a really formidable new Socialist movement inside either Germany or Italy. To pretend that this hope exists at present is to surrender to fantasy just as much as it is fantasy to dream under existing circumstances of a General Strike against war.

It follows that Socialists in those countries in which an

organised Socialist movement is still able to exist and to carry on public agitation, and in which Socialism can hope to form or to affect the Government, and can work for a non-revolutionary transition to Socialism, cannot under the existing conditions simply take up the attitude that "the workers have no country." They cannot, unless they are prepared and able to commit their movement to pure pacifism, dissociate themselves from the affairs of their nation or stand ready, in terms of the declared policy of international Socialism before 1914, "to use the political and economic crisis created by the war to rouse the populace from its slumbers and to hasten the fall of capitalist domination." It may come to that as the war proceeds; for no one can tell in advance how the situation will develop when war has actually broken out. But the pre-war policy of Socialist internationalism implied the existence of organised Socialist forces in both the warring camps. It implied that there was nothing to choose between the warring capitalist factions, and it did not at all contemplate a situation in which one of the leading combatants would be itself a Socialist Power allied with the less noxious group of capitalist countries. The advent of Socialism in Russia and the complete suppression of the Socialist movement in the Fascist countries have so altered the entire situation that old slogans no longer apply. Indeed, if these slogans failed international Socialism in 1914 what hope can there be that they will be effective now, when the changed international situation has made them far more remote from reality?

If the majority of Socialists were pure pacifists, and if they could hope to persuade the majority of the organised workers to take up a purely pacifist attitude, there would be no more to be said. The policy to be followed would then settle itself by a mass refusal to take part in war based on a clear stand on principle. No regard would be paid to

consequences. Men would simply refuse to fight on the ground that war was wrong.

But it will be admitted that the vast majority of Socialists and trade unionists are not pure pacifists. Pure pacifism, as it exists among Quakers and also among other individuals here and there, including a number of Socialists, is the absolute *credo* only of a tiny minority. I happen to be one of that minority—or at least I think I am ; for I am unable to conceive of myself taking part under any circumstances in an attempt to slaughter my fellow-men. But I regard this belief of mine as an idiosyncrasy—I use the word in a neutral and not in either a bad or a good sense—I do not regard it as a necessary accompaniment of Socialist faith. I heartily wish the entire human race could be brought to share this view of mine, and I hope that the vast majority of men will in the end be brought to share it. But I have to recognise that for the present most people, including most of my fellow-Socialists, do not feel with me, but regard my attitude as "peculiar." Knowing this, I cannot seek to shape the actual policy of the Socialist movement in accordance with conclusions which follow from my personal belief, but not from theirs. I cannot try to force the *consequences* of my view upon fellow-Socialists who do not share my *reasons*. I would rather be killed than kill, even for Socialism—or at any rate I think I would ; for no one really knows about himself till he comes finally to the test. But for the practical politics of to-day I have regretfully to regard my personal attitude of pure pacifism as irrelevant.

Either, then, I have to keep out of politics altogether, and to abstain from writing about political affairs as well as from playing a practical part in them, or I must take men as they are and not as I should like them to be. Taking them as they are, I have to regard sheer non-resistance as lying outside the range of practical Socialist policy to-day. If that is excluded, what remains ? It is certainly neither

logical nor good sense to be ready to go to war, if what is deemed a sufficient occasions arises, but not to be ready to make any preparation for it. But then comes the question —How much preparation? For excessive preparation for war, leading on to a competitive race in armaments between the Great Powers, is undoubtedly calculated to increase the danger that war will actually come. It gives the generals and war-mongers and armament makers a quite undue share of public influence : it encourages a warlike temper in the countries against which the preparations are directed ; and it fosters in the minds of the people a sense of the inevitability of war itself. Even if I have to exclude pure pacifism when I am considering the right practical policy for Socialists in the circumstances of to-day, that by no means removes the necessity for urging upon them an attitude which shall be demonstrably pacific, though it cannot be finally pacifist.

Socialists have therefore to steer a course somewhere between voting always for unilateral reductions in armaments as a token of their will to peace and voting for larger armaments in the hope of thereby scaring the war-mongers in other countries away from actual resort to arms. But the point at which it is right to stand between these two extremes must depend on the contemporary situation. If the nations are all to make themselves secure without alliances, each must be stronger than any of the others, which is absurd. Not only that : each must be stronger than all the rest combined, which is a still greater absurdity. It may be possible for one country to make itself so strong as to feel secure against attack by any likely combination of its neighbours. But evidently all countries cannot do this, and any one country that sets out to do it will have to waste most of its substance on armaments and will have little left to spend on either social services or economic development. Moreover, its action in arming to the teeth for its own defence

will inevitably speed up the pace of armament in other countries, so that the more heavily it arms the more heavily still will it need to go on arming if it is to preserve its security. A policy of unsplendid isolation may be just possible for a very rich country, such as Great Britain ; but it is bound to be very costly and to increase the war danger in the world as a whole. Nor can we leave out of account its implication that we do not care a rap what happens to the rest of the world, if only we ourselves as a nation can remain immune from attack. But in present circumstances, if Great Britain follows the policy of unsplendid isolation, can we even rely on our own continued immunity ? If we stand aside and allow the Fascist and imperialist countries to dominate the rest of the world, how long is our own security likely to last ? The time will come when we in our turn shall need allies, and there will be none left to whom we can look for help.

National isolation is not a possible policy for Socialists, whatever it may be for egoistic imperialists who can see no more than an inch in front of their noses. We Socialists should be bound to care greatly if, through our isolationist attitude, Soviet Russia, or even parliamentary France, were to be dismembered or overthrown, and if the entire Continent of Europe were to pass under some sort of Fascist domination while Japan took undisputed command of the East. If we desire to avert these dangers, and at the same time to seek our own security at a smaller cost and in a less egoistic fashion than national isolation involves, we are constrained to aim at some form of "pooled security"—that is, at some arrangement which will seek to ensure a sufficient preponderance of pooled strength against any aggressive Power that may attempt to disturb the peace. Even the Locarno Pact, uncertain as its obligations are, has gone some way towards lessening the immediate danger of direct aggression in Western Europe. But there is no

Eastern or African Locarno, and no pact to check aggression in the territories that formed the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The League of Nations does indeed embody in its Covenant some clauses which are designed to make the aggressor amenable to the combined force of the League Powers ; but these clauses are so drafted as to make their operation very difficult and uncertain, and, apart from that, nowadays neither Germany nor Japan can be counted as a member of the League system, and Italy ranked, even before the African crisis, only as a doubtful member.

In these circumstances, what ought British Socialists to do ? The existing doubts and confusions in the Socialist ranks show how exceedingly difficult it is to discover and to hold to the right course. At one extreme stands the view that German Nazism is so desperate a foe to Socialism and so big a danger to the whole world that it ought to be stamped out at all costs. Those who took this view on the morrow of the Nazi victory would have had Great Britain and France, in alliance with Russia, wage at the earliest possible moment a " preventive war," march into Germany and overthrow the Nazis by force, and then—what ? Reinstate the Weimar Republic ? Set up a Socialist State ? Dismember Germany, as many Frenchmen wished to do in 1919 ? It is obvious that not one of these courses was really practicable, even if " preventive war " had been levied at once, before there had been time for Germany to rearm : The Weimar Republic would have toppled again as soon as the armies of occupation were withdrawn : it is absurd to suppose that non-Socialist Governments in France and Great Britain would have agreed to set up a Socialist system in Germany ; and any attempt at partition would merely have served to rouse the German nationalist consciousness to fresh extremes of fury.

The policy of " preventive war " was always foolish ; and to-day it is quite obviously impracticable as well. Neither

France nor Great Britain has the smallest intention of making war on the Nazis, except in response to definite Nazi aggression. There are still some people who maintain that this policy should have been followed in 1933 ; but no one in his senses supposes that it should be followed to-day.

An alternative view is that Great Britain ought to make a binding military alliance with France and Russia, openly directed against Nazi aggression, and ought thus to strengthen and broaden the existing Franco-Soviet Pact into a system of "pooled security" between the anti-Fascist States. This would involve Great Britain in making definite promises, in certain eventualities, to go to war on behalf of France or Russia, in the hope that the declared pooling of strength by these three countries would compel the Nazis to keep the peace out of fear. There is more plausibility about this suggestion of a purely defensive alliance against Nazism ; but there is a fatal objection to it from the British point of view. It would assuredly fail to command the support of a sufficient section of British opinion, or of the British Labour movement as a whole.

There are two reasons for this. The first, affecting principally non-Socialist opinion, is that the Nazis have certainly no present intention of making any direct attack on Great Britain. On the contrary, though they have their eyes on colonial empire, they are eager for the present to cultivate British support, or at any rate neutrality, in order to strengthen their hands against France and the Soviet Union. This means that any Pact between Great Britain and France and Russia would in fact involve a promise on Great Britain's part to go to the aid of the other two countries, but no real promise on their part to go to the aid of Great Britain—because this latter contingency would be most unlikely to arise in the near future. Isolationist opinion in Great Britain is certainly strong enough to offer very powerful resistance to a binding promise by the British

Government to take part in a European war in which Great Britain would not be directly menaced—especially as the opposition would be reinforced by a number of persons who would strongly denounce any sort of alliance with the Soviet Union.

Socialists might possibly be prepared to face this formidable opposition if they were united among themselves. But assuredly they could not unite on a policy of this sort. It would be energetically opposed by all the pacifists, who would be against any action that would commit Great Britain to go to war. It would be opposed also by those who still put their faith in the League of Nations, and hold that any system of collective security ought to be built up only under League auspices and on terms open equally to all countries. Finally, it would almost certainly be opposed by the British Dominions, whose veto, in such a matter, it would be difficult for any British Government to override.

A third possible policy is that of declared isolation. The advocates of this attitude would have the British Government—and the Labour Party as the official Opposition—definitely declare the intention of abstaining from intervention in Europe, no matter what aggressive action the Fascists may take. This body of opinion is opposed even to Great Britain's existing commitments under the League Covenant, and favours instead a heavily armed aloofness designed to protect the British Empire, whatever else may fall. This attitude has of course no following among Socialists ; it is, indeed, clearly inconsistent with the international outlook of Socialism. It is not a possible policy for a Socialist Government ; but it has enough adherents in Great Britain to provide formidable reinforcement for those who are hostile to British commitments in Europe on other grounds.

The fourth possible policy is for Great Britain to reaffirm her full adherence to her obligations under the League

Covenant, and her will to strengthen these obligations to the fullest extent, up to the point of establishing a definite system of pooled security directly under the auspices of the League. This policy, if only it is practicable, has very great advantages. It would rally, instead of antagonising, the "League pacifists," as distinct from those pure pacifists who refuse to contemplate participation in war on any account. It would be acceptable to many people—Socialists as well as non-Socialists—who would reject the idea of an outright military alliance with France and Russia. Adhesion to a security system of this sort would be open to every Power, including Germany, that was prepared to accept its obligations ; and it would come far nearer than a Three Power Pact to offering Great Britain a plainly worth-while return for the obligations which would have to be incurred on its account.

The vital question is whether a policy of this sort is really practicable. Can a proposal so to strengthen the League Covenant as to base on it a real system of pooled security be in effect more than mere words ? In face of the present attitude of Italy towards the League, it is not easy to argue, that it can, at all events without involving an Italian secession. I am not, however, at all convinced that it might not be a thoroughly good thing to have Italy, as well as Germany and Japan, outside the League for the present. Italy's presence in the League has been, as matters have stood of late, a source of weakness : the League would be more manageable and more hopeful without Mussolini. The French, quite naturally, do not take this view. For they have the Italians on their frontier, and they have regarded Italy's membership of the League as some help towards holding Mussolini and Hitler apart. But if Great Britain had promptly made it plain to the French that this country would stand for no pooled security except under the auspices of the League, and further that Great Britain would not

tolerate Italian aggression in Abyssinia or elsewhere in order to keep Italy within the League, or on the side of France against the Germans, the French would have had to choose the sooner between joining Great Britain and Russia in an effort to strengthen the League Covenant, and definitely forfeiting all claim to British help even in face of a German attack. The effect of confronting the French with this plain choice might have been to make possible a stiffening up of the League Covenant, and even to prepare the way for an attempt to make imperialist rivalries less dangerous by an international handling of colonial problems under League auspices and in conformity with the system of mandates.

I believe, then, that this is the right policy for British Socialists to pursue at the present moment. Its disadvantage is that it involves, for the time being, an attitude which can be easily misunderstood. It involves a refusal to give any promises of siding with France and the Soviet Union against Germany until these promises can be given not to France and Russia as such but to a strengthened League of Nations itself. It is therefore a reasonable policy only if those who advocate it make plain at once their intention to work hard for stiffening up the terms of the League Covenant, their determination not to allow the observance of those obligations which already exist under the Covenant to be whittled away on any account with British connivance, and their refusal to be deterred by any fear of driving Italy into the German camp from taking a firm line in support of any country which is threatened with aggression in violation of international law.

I do not mean by this that I think Great Britain ought to go to war, or Socialists to urge Great Britain to go to war, in order to prevent Mussolini, or any other imperialist bandit, from invading Abyssinia or anywhere else. What is desirable is to urge upon the League, with a full

determination to honour any obligations that may ensue; a decisive condemnation of any covenant breaker or imperialist adventurer who disturbs the peace, and to declare complete willingness to join in any measures against aggression that the League can be induced to take.

If this line were followed, British Socialism would have at least an intelligible policy, on which I think the vast majority of its adherents would be prepared to unite, and a large mass of non-Socialist opinion to lend its support. But this policy has a necessary complement. It follows from it that, in relation to Germany, Great Britain ought to do nothing, and to oppose anything, that can plausibly be regarded as showing a willingness to come to terms with the Nazis apart from the League, or apart from France and Russia. Accordingly, it involves a decisive condemnation of the attitude which found expression in the British-German Naval Agreement of 1935. There should be no separate pacts between Great Britain and Nazi Germany, made behind the backs of the League and the other League Powers. The British attitude to the Nazis should be one of complete aloofness, save to the extent to which the German Government is prepared to enter into pacts definitely designed to safeguard peace, not merely between Germany and Great Britain, but on the Continent of Europe. Great Britain should be very ready to sign, with Germany and France and Russia and the other interested States, an Eastern Locarno or a Danubian Locarno ; but on no account should Great Britain sign any separate military or political agreement with the Nazis.

If, in accordance with this policy, the League could be induced to strengthen the bonds between its remaining members, the way would be open for a real advance towards a system of pooled security under the direct auspices of the League. Success in achieving this, even if it were only partial, would make possible reductions of armaments by

the League Powers, even apart from any agreement by Nazi Germany ; for the combined armaments of the League countries would be more than enough to defeat any likely combination of aggressive States. The armaments race would thus be halted, or at the very least slowed down, and it would become far easier to renew negotiations for the qualitative and quantitative limitation of armaments by general treaty, including the Powers outside the League. In these attempts qualitative rather than quantitative limitation seems for the present to deserve pride of place. There is more hope of stirring up a sufficient body of public opinion in all countries in favour of eliminating altogether the more atrocious forms of warfare than of getting agreement to limit the quantity of armaments which each country is to be allowed to possess. I think the aim should be to secure in the first instance (a) complete prohibition of the bombing of civilians from the air, (b) agreed limitation of the size and armament of warships, of the calibre of land guns and of the size of tanks and aeroplanes, (c) agreed limitations upon the right of naval blockade, and therewith upon the use of submarines and upon their permitted size, (d) agreed demilitarisation of frontier areas wherever this can be achieved, and (e) agreed restrictions on the use of poison gas and the complete prohibition of all the more devastating gases.

These proposals would have to a large extent to be dealt with together. For inevitably one of them favours one country and one another. Great Britain, for example, should be very ready to abandon her claims to control the seas if therewith she could secure immunity from air attack and unlimited submarine warfare. But perhaps it would be worth while to begin with an attempt to secure a general agreement on one single matter—the bombing of civilians from the air. For as the fear of aerial bombing is now for most civilians war's greatest terror, its removal by general

agreement would have most influence in allaying those feelings of panic upon which scare-mongers prey and armament makers rely for keeping their trade upon a profitable footing.

In all this where, it may be asked, does Socialism come in? How does what I am saying differ from what might be said by any sincere member of the League of Nations Union belonging to any party or to none? It does not differ at all. For there is, in the present condition of the world, no specifically Socialist way of preventing war. To-day world Socialism is on the defensive against the war-makers and under the pressing necessity of seeking non-Socialist allies for the prevention of war. The more countries we can win over to Socialism the more confident we can be that the campaign for peace will be earnestly pursued. For the Socialist movement is everywhere on the side of peace. But—let us be clear on this point—in the present condition of the world the Socialist movement—and even the entire working-class movement—is impotent, by itself and without non-Socialist helpers, to prevent war.

Our task, then, is to consolidate the power of Socialism in those countries in which the constitutional road to power still lies open. Sweden, Norway and Denmark have all to-day predominantly Socialist Governments, though in each country these have to work in dependence for their majorities on non-Socialist groups. In Belgium the Socialist Party forms part of a mainly non-Socialist coalition pledged to a fairly advanced economic programme of expansion and reform under capitalism. In Great Britain, Labour is the only opposition that counts, and can reasonably hope to become the Government before many years are over. In France the Socialist Party is the most solid and best organised party, and has been working for some time past in a *front commun* with the Communists, who are of far more account in France than they are in Great Britain. Moreover,

this has recently been extended into a *front populaire*, including the left-wing Radical groups as well. In no one of these countries is there, under present conditions, the smallest prospect or possibility of revolution *a la Russe*—that is, of a sudden dissolution of the capitalist order which would lay the way open for a complete Socialist victory. But the way is open, as it never was in Russia, for a constitutional advance towards Socialism and for a steady strengthening of Socialist sentiment by means of open propaganda and by giving a plain demonstration of the political competence of Socialist leadership.

At present this advance is badly hampered by the lamentable disunity of the Socialist forces. The Communists have for years past been denouncing the Social Democrats and trade union leaders as “social traitors,” or latterly as “social Fascists,” calling them every ill name they can lay their tongues to, and trying their hardest to undermine their authority over the organised working class. This Communist policy was intelligible as long as the Communists were really thinking in terms of an imminent world revolution on the Russian model, and as long as they remained unconscious of the danger that the decay of parliamentary institutions might clear the road not for Socialism but for Fascism instead. But this policy is utterly inappropriate and un-rationalistic to-day, when the U.S.S.R. confessedly needs the collaboration of western countries for the preservation of peace, and when the Communist leaders in Russia have come to recognise that Parliamentarism, whatever they may think of its defects and hypocrisies, is at all events immensely preferable to open Fascist dictatorship. There are, of course, plenty of signs that Moscow is aware of the changing needs of the contemporary situation; and there are some signs that the Communist policy outside Russia is being modified under their influence. But, as we have seen, it is not easy to come round all of a sudden to the

view that the "social traitor" of yesterday is the friend and "comrade" of to-day's "united front," and the Communists in the western countries are still too much inclined to alternate between treating us other Socialists as men and brothers and spitting hard in our faces.

Nor are they wholly without excuse; for Labour has everywhere a right wing that does positively prefer nice gentlemanly capitalists to unamiable unpractical revolutionaries. This right wing receives strong reinforcement from trade union leaders who bitterly resent the years of continuous vilification and Communist intrigue to which they have been subjected, and have as a consequence developed a deeply rooted anti-Communist "complex." When nowadays Communists come to these same leaders demanding a "united front against war and Fascism," they are seldom received with gladness. Their offers of friendship are regarded as yet another attempt to undermine the existing leadership by "boring from within"—as indeed they partly are, and are bound to be as long as the Communists of Western Europe continue to regard the creation of a revolutionary temper among the workers as the only way of advancing the Socialist cause.

If, however, the Russians would apply their realism to their view of internal Socialist policy in the western countries as well as to international affairs, it should not take them long to realise that in Western Europe to-day the Communist revolution does not stand the smallest chance of success, or even of happening at all, and that attempts to promote it can at most only hamper the efforts of the Socialist parties to advance towards Socialism by non-revolutionary means. Communist propaganda of forcible revolution positively makes the Socialist parties more reactionary and compromising than they would otherwise be; for it induces their leaders to dissociate themselves from the Communists by every possible means and to go

to extremes of "rightness," in their determination to reassure the moderate and semi-Socialist supporters without whose aid they cannot hope to achieve a constitutional conquest of power. If Moscow would and could call off its associated gadflies in Western Europe, Socialists in the western countries would soon become both more advanced than they are as Socialists and readier in international matters to follow the line that Moscow wants. The present disunity tends to make the Socialist "centre" move towards the "right," whereas its natural inclination would be to move further to the "left" under the inspiration of Socialist construction in the U.S.S.R. and of the tentative advance of the U.S.S.R. towards collaboration in Western Europe.

I want to see a Socialist united front wide enough to embrace both the Communists and the trade unions. But I can see no hope of securing this unity, save precariously and sporadically here and there, until the Communists cease to regard other Socialists as "social traitors" and to act as if every means of compassing their downfall and of disintegrating their following were justifiable in the name of the Socialist Revolution. It is impossible to have a workable united front except on a basis of mutual fair dealing; and if Communist leaders can justly charge many trade union and Labour Party leaders with suffering from anti-Bolshevik mania, so can the rest of us justly charge many of the Communists with tactics based on a denial of decent and honourable dealing that makes it nearly impossible to work with them at all.

In Great Britain, in the Scandinavian countries, and in Belgium, the Communist strength is so small that the harm done by this quarrelling is not desperately serious, although it is continuously annoying and hampering to the Socialist cause. But in France Communism does count as a considerable practical force; and in recent months a real effort

has been made to heal the breach. The Franco-Soviet Treaty has made it quite impossible for the French Communists not to change their tune. Indeed, they have been put in some danger of being led to change it too abruptly. In some matters the French Communist Party is now in real peril of being driven to the right of the Socialists. For has not Stalin declared in favour of the French Government's military programme, and thereby prevented loyal Communists from joining in the Socialist campaign against intensive rearmament? The Russians make no bones about their desire that France should be heavily armed. For the Russians are in a panic and care very little from whom reinforcement comes as long as it comes from some quarter. Consequently we have the curious spectacle of French Communists taking the side of French militarists against French Socialists who have kept enough sense of international responsibility to aim at keeping the armaments race in check. This Gilbertian situation could be turned to good effect if the two parties were induced by it to arrive at a closer understanding, based on a plain recognition that working-class solidarity is essential if the defence of France against the German danger is to be made equally her defence against reaction from within. But any such understanding must rest on agreement to work, for the present, not for revolution but for the defence of parliamentary institutions. It must involve for the Communists the eating of a good many of their words besides the anti-militarism which they have already given up.

For all the western countries in which parliamentarism is still in operation, the correct Socialist policy for the present is to rally to its defence. Internationally the correct policy is for all these countries, as far as possible under Socialist leadership and influence, to band themselves together through the League of Nations into a mutual security league against war, as far as practicable to pool their

armaments, and to proceed jointly to bring about the largest amount of qualitative and quantitative limitation of armaments and restriction upon permitted methods of warfare that the non-parliamentary countries can be induced to accept. This means, of course, that Socialists in all the parliamentary countries will have to press hard upon their Governments, and be ready to endorse where they themselves are the Government, measures which may seem to many people to run counter to individual national interests, but which must be accepted if international action for the preservation of peace is to stand any chance of success. Thus Great Britain must be urged to give up big tanks, the "right" to bomb colonial peoples, and the unrestricted right of naval blockade. France must be prepared to limit the size of her air fleet and to reduce again, the period of military service as part of a general agreement for the pooling of armed forces. The continuous urging of measures of this order, coupled with continuous resistance to the attempts of the war-mongers to speed up the armaments race on grounds of national preparedness, will provide for Socialists in the western countries plenty of useful occupation in the cause of peace. That apart, their immediate task is to concentrate on achieving the fullest possible amount of working-class solidarity and on gaining as many allies outside the working class as they can bring over without sacrifice of Socialist principles. These things they must do if they are to be successful in winning political and economic power, and thus to gain the opportunity of using this power to demonstrate, in face of past Communist denials, that it is practicable, at any rate in Western Europe, to achieve real advances towards Socialism along a non-revolutionary road.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE REORGANISATION OF BUSINESS

IN THE CAPITALIST SOCIETIES of to-day the organisation of business is a matter for private initiative, except in the relatively few cases in which the sheer impossibility or the demonstrated failure of "private enterprise" has led to public action. In Great Britain the State builds and repairs some but not all of its own warships, makes some of its own munitions in Government arsenals, mints its own coins, provides directly for the sending of letters and telegrams, conducts as public enterprises the telephone service and the Post Office Savings Bank, and directly employs the personnel of the Civil Service and the armed forces. Many of the local authorities, under powers granted by the State, run their own trams, gas and electricity services, housing estates, systems of water supply, markets and hospitals. All of them have to run their own schools, though private schools still exist side by side with those which are maintained out of public funds. Roads are provided and kept up by the local authorities, with special help from the State through the Road Fund. Broadcasting, passenger transport in Greater London, and the wholesale distribution of electric current over the whole country are conducted by public corporations directly constituted by Act of Parliament. Docks and harbours are sometimes municipally owned and sometimes under the authority of special boards or commissions set up by the State. The total

of publicly owned and administered services in Great Britain is already considerable, and it has a constant tendency to grow.

But within the sphere of action that is partly covered by public enterprise, private enterprise still remains in being. More warships are built in private than in Admiralty dockyards, more munitions made by capitalist firms than in Government arsenals. The trustee savings banks exist side by side with the Post Office Savings Bank : the State mints coins, but bank notes are privately printed on behalf of the Bank of England, which is still in form a private corporation. Private tramway and omnibus companies, private gas, electricity and water companies, exist side by side with municipal services. The State and the local authorities provide schools for the poor ; but the Churches also conduct non-provided schools with Government aid, and the well-to-do still go to private schools or to those so-called "public" schools which the public neither owns nor controls. The older universities retain the form of medieval gilds, and even the newer universities remain largely outside the scheme of public education. Municipal housing is regarded only as a means of supplementing the efforts of private builders, by providing types of houses which it does not pay private enterprise to supply ; and even municipal houses are far more often built by private firms than by "direct labour" employed by the local authorities. Private hospitals supported by endowments and private charity exist side by side with public hospitals. Omnibuses are mostly in private hands except in London. The generation of electricity, as distinct from its bulk transmission, is still largely in the hands of capitalist "power companies." Some ports are owned by railway companies, which are private concerns conducting the entire railway service, except the London Underground, for the profit of their shareholders. Thus even the services

which are recognised as "public utilities" still remain largely under private ownership and control.

The State does indeed regulate in varying degrees a number of services which it does not directly provide. Railways, gas, water and electricity companies, tramways, and to a less extent other road transport agencies, are subject to special forms of public control. So in various ways are the Bank of England, the coal mines, many forms of agriculture under the Agricultural Marketing Acts, and other industries and services to a smaller extent. Insurance companies, friendly societies, savings banks, building societies, co-operative societies, and trade unions, are all in some degree regulated by special Acts of Parliament. So are ordinary joint stock companies, universities and schools, charities and service institutions of many different kinds. But in all these latter cases the aim of the State hitherto has been to keep intervention within the narrowest possible limits ; and regulation has been mainly directed against sheerly fraudulent practices and designed to allow the various bodies freedom to develop as far as possible according to the will of the private persons who control their working.

Beside "private enterprise," public enterprise, despite its growth in recent years, still bulks very small ; and even public regulation plays no considerable part in the working of most types of business. There are Factory Acts, Mines Acts, Shops Acts, Trade Boards Acts and the like, which limit to some extent the freedom of employers to impose any conditions of labour that they can compel their employees to accept. But there is still no general public regulation of either wages or hours of labour ; and it is still thought desirable, in the vast majority of cases, to leave the conditions of employment to what is called "freedom of contract" between employer and employed. Much less is the employer usually under any sort of public

direction in deciding upon the kinds and quantities of goods which he is to produce. There is no public control over the raising and allocation of new capital, which settles the form which economic development is to assume. There is, save in a few public utilities, no control or limitation of profits except by way of the general taxation of incomes. Banking and the manufacture of credit remain wholly in private hands, except for the collaboration which usually exists in practice between the Treasury and the privately owned Bank of England ; for there is no public control at all over the activities of the joint stock banks, or over those financial houses which go by the name of the " City." It is still the basic principle of the British economic system that private property is sacred, and that a man may do what he likes with " his own," subject only to certain very limited safeguards which the State has imposed upon certain particular abuses of the property system.

True, the whole of the domain that lies outside the range of public enterprise is not given over to profit-making. There are numerous charities and endowed institutions which are not conducted for profit. The universities, many of the so-called " public " schools, the private hospitals, the churches, and many other lay and ecclesiastical foundations are in the nature of " trusts," conducted either for the benefit of all comers or for that of a limited group or social class. There is, moreover, a widespread and very important co-operative movement owned and controlled by the consumers on a footing of equal membership open to all. There are co-operative stores scattered all over the country, most densely in the industrial districts ; and apart from retail shops the co-operative movement conducts many trading depots and factories of its own, and steadily widens the scope of its challenge to private capitalist enterprise. The co-operative movement pays interest to its shareholders and is to that extent " capitalistic." But it disposes

of its surplus over and above a limited rate of interest not in distributions of profits to these same shareholders but in "dividends" on purchases, which are in effect rebates on the prices paid by its customers. Consumers' co-operation sometimes puts forward the claim to be considered as a complete alternative to Socialism—that is, to the public ownership and conduct of industry—as well as to capitalism. But, vastly important as it is and will continue to be, its sphere of action is necessarily limited. Co-operation is admirable as a method of organising the distribution of household supplies ; but it is by its very nature incapable of penetrating and dominating the great industries which produce basic materials and capital goods, or the great services, such as housing, transport and the supply of fuel and power.

Where a service is publicly controlled the nature and amount of its output are matters of public planning. A decision is reached by whatever public body is entrusted with this function, both about the nature and quantity of goods to be produced in the immediate future and about the provision that is to be made for future production by way of new capital equipment. Sometimes, as in the case of schools and roads, the public bodies which are in charge of these services decide directly what provision to make in the light of their own estimates of public needs. In other cases, in the Post Office for example, the public body offers facilities which the consumers are free to take or leave and regularly adjusts its prices and estimates according to its experience of what the public is prepared to buy. The distinction here is largely between those goods and services which are consumed collectively and those which are matters of individual consumption. Compulsory school attendance turns elementary schooling into a form of collective consumption : roads are essentially amenities for collective use. The postal services, on the other hand, are a matter of private demand which the State can influence

by charging higher or lower prices, but can only respond to and not positively create. Wherever demand is essentially individual and voluntary, planned output has to respond to the consumers' desires, though it can respond in a number of different ways, either encouraging or discouraging demand by the prices at which it makes the various goods and services available for purchase.

Outside the range of publicly owned services there is for the most part no collective planning of output. Where the production of a particular commodity or service is controlled by a capitalist trust, the directors of the trust can indeed plan output no less than this can be done by a public authority. But the directors will do this with a view to securing the maximum profit for the private owners of the concern and not with a view primarily to the public service. These two objects may on occasion coincide ; but where they do not, the trust or combine will clearly prefer private to public advantage. It cannot help doing so under existing conditions ; for all private capitalist enterprise is conducted with a view to profit, and profit is the incentive on which the world at present relies for getting most of its work done.

Despite the great growth of capitalist combination in recent years, the trust, able to plan the entire output of industry with a view to maximum profit, is still the exception in Great Britain. Imperial Chemical Industries, the Unilever Combine, and the Coats Sewing Cotton Combine are the outstanding examples of fairly complete trustification. The Imperial Tobacco Company is only an incomplete though a very powerful monopoly ; and most other trusts and combines either are less inclusive or are of a "cartel" type, linking together a number of firms which submit only conditionally and within limits and for a limited period to a common discipline. A cartel may be able in fact to plan output no less completely than an inclusive

trust ; but in Great Britain cartels, are everywhere except in the coal industry, voluntary and terminable arrangements between independent firms, and this fact limits their capacity to plan for the future as well as for the present.

Where trusts or inclusive cartels do not exist, each employer "plans" his own output in the light of his estimates of the condition of the market. In some trades which produce mainly "to order" the employer hardly plans at all, but merely responds to the actual orders which he receives from his customers, doing what he can to adjust his prices to changing conditions of demand. But many trades have to make largely for "stock," that is, in anticipation of orders which may or may not be forthcoming in the expected amounts. In these trades the employer has to guess what he will be able to sell at this or that price and to decide in the light of his guess what it is best to charge and how much it is worth while to produce. His knowledge both of what his competitors are doing and of the total size of the market at any particular level of prices is narrowly limited—more or less according to the nature of the trade ; and it is his function under capitalism to shoulder the "uncertainty" which this lack of knowledge involves. In a competitive trade, whether it makes mainly for stock or to order, there can be no planning of production—only a more or less intelligent anticipation of market conditions in making for stock and a more or less intelligent advance provision of instruments of production where it is a matter of waiting for orders to come in.

Socialists regard this method of getting goods produced and services rendered as no better than chaos, and as involving an altogether indefensible amount of waste and misdirection of productive effort. They hold that it is possible, subject to far less risk of error than our present methods involve, to predict the course of demand and to provide means for its satisfaction. Of course no system can

wholly eliminate mistakes ; for production must involve anticipation of what people will want, and anticipation can never be absolutely correct. But the risk of error is least where knowledge is greatest, and most where each of a number of businesses is producing and equipping itself to produce in competition with all the others and in ignorance of what they are doing and intending to do. Only monopoly, that is, unified control over the entire output of a trade, can give at the same time the fullest possible knowledge of market conditions and the means of making the best possible provision for meeting market needs.

This conclusion is reinforced where, as in most up-to-date processes of production, costs can be considerably reduced by large-scale output, by standardisation of product and by specialisation of plants to the making of a narrow range of goods. The monopolist can secure all these advantages to a far greater extent than the competitive producer. He can also usually buy his raw materials at a cheaper rate and with a closer adaptation to his needs. He can economise on transport, advertising and other "over-head" expenses ; and he can afford to engage in large-scale research with the object of further reducing costs, and of constantly varying and improving his products in order to meet and to anticipate public taste.

As against these advantages have to be set certain handicaps. When businesses grow very large, the difficulties of managing them increase. There is danger of top-heaviness, bureaucracy, lack of initiative and adaptation to changing needs. There is also, in capitalist monopolies, serious danger of over-capitalisation on a scale sufficient to cancel all the real economies achieved by means of unification. In order to build up the monopoly, competing businesses are often bought up at inflated prices ; and the creation of the monopoly is often accompanied by financial manipulations which result in large "rake-offs" for promoters and other

interested persons. But these financial abuses are the accompaniments of capitalist monopoly : they have no relevance to a consideration of Socialist planning based on public ownership and control.

As for the dangers of top-heaviness, bureaucracy and lack of initiative, the position is different. These dangers are inherent in all large-scale organisations, private and public alike. Capitalist enterprise has found means of meeting them in part by the decentralisation of control. In all save a few matters which are reserved in the hands of the central direction, the managers and directors of the separate factories and units included in a combine are left a wide discretion to conduct operations in the ways they think best. Socialist planned economy in Russia, after an initial period of over-centralisation, is resorting to similar methods ; and they are clearly essential to the success of any large-scale planning, under whatever auspices it is carried on. When Socialist planning is instituted in Great Britain, it will be necessary to carry this decentralisation of control much further than it can be carried under capitalism, by giving the workers employed in each industry and enterprise a really effective voice in the control of its activities. We shall return to this vitally important point in the next chapter.

This appraisal of monopoly does not of course mean that Socialists are in favour of private monopolies organised for the more successful exploitation of the consuming public. Even under capitalism monopoly may sometimes, thanks to the economies of unified production and sale, provide cheaper goods than competing capitalists would be able to supply. But this does not often happen ; for the object of monopolists under capitalism is not to supply cheap goods but to make high profits. Even where it does pay the monopolist to lower prices in order to reach a wider market and so reduce his costs and increase his total

profits, he will usually lower prices less than he could afford to lower them and will thus continue to exact an excess reward for himself. Moreover, in any case of "inelastic" demand, he will keep prices as high as he can, and be able to raise them a good deal higher than they could be raised under competitive conditions. Where the public must have a thing, whatever it costs, the monopolist is able to levy the maximum toll on the community.

Capitalist monopoly and capitalist competition are alike ways of exploiting the consumer and of refusing to meet his needs at all except where more profit can be made by supplying them than by leaving them unsupplied. Of the two, capitalist competition exploits the consumer less on the whole, despite its frequent inability to take advantage of the technical opportunities for improving the efficiency of production, and despite the waste involved in its ignorance of the market situation. If the choice lay between capitalist competition and capitalist monopoly, the consumers might reasonably prefer competition. But this choice does not in fact exist. Increasing monopoly is an inherent tendency of modern capitalism which no laws against trusts and combines have been able effectively to prevent. Some capitalist industries remain competitive; but others pass irresistibly under the control of some sort of monopoly, and in fact more and more industries become at least semi-monopolistic as mass production advances.

Recognition of this fact and of the greater power of the monopolist to know market conditions and to avail himself of the opportunities of low-cost production has led of late to a world-wide change of attitude towards capitalist combines. States, instead of trying to repress trusts and cartels, have turned to encouraging them and even to making them compulsory; and this tendency has been accentuated during the years of depression by the desire to prevent "cut-throat competition" and "excessive

production" beyond the buying power of the market at a remunerative price. States have laid hold of the instrument of monopoly and have used it for the deliberate restriction of output, on the plea that the producers must be sure of their profit at a "reasonable" rate if they are to be expected to go on providing commodities or employment. Monopoly in its restrictive aspects has flourished mightily of late under the new name of "rationalisation." But "rationalisation" is unpopular both with the consumers and with the workers; for it appears to offer to the workers less employment and to the consumers less goods at an enhanced price.

The monopoly which Socialists favour is public monopoly carried on not for private profit but for the service of the whole people. They want monopoly to be used not for the restriction of output in order to maintain profits but for securing the highest output of goods and services that is consistent with the community's demand for leisure and for decent conditions of work. They want a planned rational use of all the available productive resources up to this limit, in order to provide adequately for everyone's basic needs and then, beyond this minimum, give everyone the widest possible range of choice in deciding what goods and services he prefers to consume and to use. They believe that, if production were planned in this way, it would be possible at once to raise considerably the general standard of living, and within a short space to arrive at reasonable plenty for all, while at the same time the community would be able to reduce the hours of work and lessen the irksomeness of labour and to give to the producers a far freer choice of occupation. They want to put an end both to the wastefulness and to the restrictiveness of capitalist production, and to replace capitalism by an economic system that will be administered with no other purpose than that of serving the needs and wants of all the citizens.

How, then, would Socialists organise this new economic system which they have in view? At present we tend to think of production mainly in terms of money. What will the goods cost to make, and how much money will they fetch when they have been made? These are the familiar capitalist questions, the answers to which determine whether the goods are to be produced or not. But behind these sums of money—these “costs of production” and “selling prices”—lie real things. The real cost of producing anything is the amount of human productive power, direct or indirect, that is used up in making it, allowance being of course made for differences of quality in the productive powers employed. It is the labour used up at all stages, from the growing or extraction of the raw materials to the marketing of the finished product; the labour that goes to making the machines and other “capital goods” that are worn out in the course of production; the labour of making entries in books about the goods at each stage, from the raw material to the finished article; the labour of planning and organising production at its various stages—in short, all the labour that has contributed in any way to getting the goods made and putting them into the hands of the ultimate user. All cost is finally labour cost, except that use of scarce natural objects not reproducible by human labour which all production must in some degree involve. These costs constitute the real expense of producing things; and these real costs are convertible into money costs only to the extent to which the prices paid for the various “factors of production” which are used up reflect the real amounts of human effort involved. But not all these real costs are necessarily reflected at all in the money cost of production as it appears to the individual capitalist; for he may be able to thrust some of them off upon others so that they disappear altogether out of the costs he has to reckon with in calculating his

expected profit. But, whether a real cost ranks or does not rank as a cost to the capitalist producer, from the stand-point of the community all expenses on labour or scarce natural objects used up in production are real costs.

As for the prices we pay for things, they are measures of our desires. We have mostly limited incomes, and we cannot have so much of things as we should like to have if we could have them for nothing. Our willingness to pay this or that price measures our desire for what we do buy as against our desires for the things we leave unbought. If all men's wants and incomes were alike equal, and the prices of things reflected perfectly the real costs of producing them, prices would be a perfect means of rationing satisfactions. But as matters stand, demand—that is the price people are willing to pay for things—measures wants or needs even less than money costs to the capitalist measure the real costs of production. Behind the demand which finds expression in the actual price offers of the buyers of things lurks the real demand which it imperfectly expresses—men's needs and wants for things capable of yielding satisfaction to their bodies and their minds. But let us never forget that, unless men's needs and wants are equal, and unless their incomes are equal too, money demand can never be a perfect expression of real needs and wants.

A planned Socialist society will consider production in the light of real costs related to real human needs and wants. Up to a point, as we have seen, these needs and wants are easy to estimate, and there is no doubt to what things production ought to be directed—though there may be doubt how far it is best to provide the means of supplying wants by home production or how far by the exchange of home for foreign goods. But beyond this point, when the sheer elementary needs of living have been met, we come to a realm in which men's varying desires rather than their much less varying needs have to be supplied ; and

in this realm there is much more room for doubt concerning the best use to make of the available powers of production. There are so many things we *could* produce, and men want all of them. But we cannot produce all of them in the quantities men would use if they could be had free of charge. Which, then, of all the things we *could* produce, are wanted *most*?

That question is bound to confront a planned economy, even as it confronts the capitalist economies of to-day. Capitalism settles the matter by producing what the capitalists think will pay them best in the light of such knowledge as they possess of men's desires and differing abilities to pay. From the capitalist point of view, it is of no use to make things which only penniless people want; for that way bankruptcy lies. Capitalist production is doubtless directed to meeting men's wants, for unless things are wanted they cannot be sold at all. But capitalism attends only to such wants as present themselves in the market armed with the means of payment. The richer a man is, and the more money he has to spend, the greater is his influence in inducing the capitalists to respond to his desires.

Demand in a Socialist society will be differently weighted. In proportion as society gets nearer to equality in its distribution of incomes, demand will draw nearer to coincidence with real human needs and wants. There will be less inducement to spend productive resources in satisfying one man's claims in preference to another's, because there will be a diminishing difference between their several abilities to pay. Society will be organised for meeting everybody's needs and wants in a less unequal way.

But prices are a question of "costs of production" as well as of what the buyers are prepared to pay. There will have to be different prices for different things, in accordance with their varying real costs of production. But are these real costs ascertainable at all? Capitalist economists are fond of contending that they are not, and that accordingly

Socialism can never work successfully, because there will be no means under it of discovering what it is best to produce. It is better, these economists argue, to stick to a system which does at least measure one money cost against another, and thus sets up a standard for deciding what to make and what to leave unmade. Money costs may not coincide with real costs, but they are at least measurable. Better stick to the imperfect measure we have than involve ourselves in a system that is bound to lack all means of measuring one cost against other.

' But is it really true that a Socialist society is bound to lack the means of measuring relative costs ? If no more is meant than that there is no perfect measure, we can agree : for that is true in any sort of society. But surely a Socialist society, just as much as a capitalist society, can set prices upon human labour—varying prices for labour of varying skill and scarcity. Even capitalist societies do this to some extent, on a collective basis wherever the State fixes wages ; and capitalist States are in addition constantly altering the money costs of different forms of production by the taxes which they levy on commodities, land, capital, or employment. A Socialist State will clearly not be without the means of fixing the levels of remuneration for different types of work, or the rents to be paid for different sorts of land, or, if it thinks fit, the rates of interest to be charged for the use of money for various purposes. But these things together make up the cost of production. A Socialist society will be quite able to price goods according to their several costs—fully as able as capitalist societies are to do this—and it will be in a position to decide what to produce in the light of the relation between these costs and the market demand which arises from the new distribution of incomes which it will have brought about. It may, of course, in fact decide to sell some things for less than they cost to produce in order to increase consumption, and to sell others for

more than they cost to produce, where it holds that consumption of them ought to be reduced on social grounds. But most things it will presumably elect to sell for what they cost, in order to give the possessors of incomes the fullest possible freedom of choice between alternative products. In most things planned production, even more than capitalist production, will respond to the consumers' wants; and it will be able to respond far better out of its greater knowledge of the condition of the market.

But, the apologists of capitalism insist, these Socialist "costs" of yours are perfectly arbitrary. They proceed from the *fiat* of the State in distributing incomes in the ways it thinks fit, and not from the "economic law" which lays down that each factor of production shall be rewarded according to its "marginal productivity." Why, so they do; and in our opinion they are all the better for it. For what does "marginal productivity" in fact mean? It means power to produce profit for a capitalist *entrepreneur*—neither more nor less than that. But in our Socialist view a man's claim to income is not based on his capacity to produce someone else a profit, or even to produce a profit for himself. It is based, up to a reasonable standard of subsistence, on his fundamental human needs, and thereafter on his capacity to render the community useful service. Of these needs and of this capacity the community is the best and the only proper judge. It may decide, in order to increase the supply of a scarce kind of labour, to offer the inducement of a higher income, which will be reflected in a higher cost of production for the goods produced. It may decide, in order to elicit harder or better work, to offer differential payments for higher output or superior craftsmanship. But the community itself is the best judge of the requisite scope and magnitude of inducements of these kinds.

Similarly with land or with capital employed in production. If the community is short of land, it will be able

to charge up a higher cost for land against those goods which involve extensive use of land in their production. If it is short of capital instruments of production, it will be able, pending the replenishing of its stock, to charge higher prices for those goods which can be produced only with the aid of extensive capital equipment. It will be able to keep the "laws of supply and demand" in operation to any extent to which it may seem desirable that they should persist. But these "laws" will work very differently, because their continued working will be based on a determined social striving after as near an approach to equality of incomes as can be reconciled with the claims of production—a nearer and nearer approach as the new society gets into fuller working order and new incentives come into play to replace and displace the old.

The constant assertion of the apologists of capitalism that a planned Socialist economy must be without the means of deciding what it is most expedient to produce rests on no foundation at all except these apologists' lack of imagination. It is a mere bogey, a mere mental enslavement to the habits of the capitalist market. A Socialist planned economy—apart from the question of foreign trade, to which I will come in a moment—will be far better equipped than any capitalist society can possibly be for producing what men most need and want, and for furthering the greatest happiness of the greatest number as far as this can be furthered by economic means. In the first place, it will be called upon to meet the basic needs of all its citizens either by collective provision or by making the goods and services available for purchase at prices within the reach of the incomes which it distributes to the poorest of its citizens. Thereafter it will provide for wants above the level of sheer need by responding to the actual money demands to which the new planned distribution of incomes gives rise.

But what of foreign trade? How is a Socialist society to

settle what to produce at home and what to procure from abroad by the exchange of its products ? Capitalist society under *free trade* left this question to settle itself in accordance with the general principle that each *entrepreneur* would be seeking the maximum profit for himself. But free trade is dead, and no capitalist society actually does that now. Foreign trade is already controlled—mainly by the contending pulls of a host of profit-seekers all trying to influence their Governments to give their own industries special protection. Under these conditions the world has come perilously near to destroying foreign trade altogether and to forfeiting the vast advantages of the international division of labour. A Socialist society will be under no temptation to resort to such follies. Where all are employed, and the only question is how to produce more, or as much with less labour, there can be no question of resorting to protection with the familiar object of "increasing employment." Nor will the State be tempted to give an industry protection in order to raise its profits. For under Socialism it will be impossible not to understand that one trade's profit is another's loss. Desiring the highest possible standard of living for all its citizens, the Socialist State will be eager to exchange with foreign countries wherever it can get better value by exchanging than by producing for itself. Restrictions on trade may still exist as long as a Socialist society has to trade with non-Socialist societies ; but it may be taken as certain that the restrictiveness will not proceed from the side of the Socialist society. The old capitalist form of free trade is dead ; and the only hope of restoring its benefits to the world is by the institution of a planned Socialist exchange of complementary products. The freely trading units of the future will be nationally planned economies producing and exchanging their surpluses in such ways as to achieve the maximum benefit that the international division of labour can yield.

## CHAPTER VIII

### THE CASE FOR INDUSTRIAL DEMOCRACY

THERE ARE TWO main reasons why Socialists stand for public ownership and responsible public management of industry. The first reason is that we want industry to be so ordered as to promote plenty for all instead of profit for a few. This aspect of Socialism has been discussed in the preceding chapter. I come now to the second reason, which is that we want men to be free and self-governing, not only as citizens of the body politic, but also in their daily work.

The ordinary worker in capitalist industry is not only exploited in a material sense, but is also treated as an inferior being. He is not a "citizen" of the industry or factory in which he works, but a mere "hand," whose business it is to obey orders that are passed down to him from above. The persons who give him these orders are in no way responsible to him or to his fellow-workers for their conduct or policy. They are either irresponsible, as being themselves "employers" who have a right to do what they like with their own, or are responsible only to the financial interests on whose behalf the business is carried on. From managing director or manager to workshop foreman, every person in the business who is entitled to give orders gives them as the delegate of the financial oligarchy which controls the high policy of the concern. The aim of this oligarchy is to make profits, and the subordinate officials

through whom its orders are passed on to the ordinary workers have to act in conformity with this aim. They are all, equally with the manual workers, servants of the financial interest, though a few of them may receive a handsome reward for their services, and a few may rank as actual members of the oligarchy which as officials it is their task to serve.

Public ownership of industry gets rid of this domination by the financial interest. Any publicly owned industry must be conducted, at any rate professedly, for service and not for profit, even when it is only an isolated instance of public ownership under a predominantly capitalist system. All those who work in a publicly owned service are able to feel that their function is to serve the community and not to pile up fortunes for a body of private capitalists. That is a great advantage for the workers engaged in the industry, as well as for the consumers of its products. No publicly owned industry that I know of turns off workers so callously as most private businesses habitually do, and must do if they are to make profits under a system in which successful profit-making is the condition of business survival. In the publicly owned industries and services, even under capitalism, the entire personnel does develop some sense of corporate responsibility towards its common task. The workers in such services have of course their own grievances : they often complain that they are not well enough paid for their work or accorded good enough conditions of service, and these complaints are quite often well founded. The State is not necessarily a good employer, even in the limited sense of being a better employer than the average private capitalist. Nevertheless, I think most of the workers in publicly owned industries do feel differently about their work from most of those who are in the service of private capitalism. They have a different sense of responsibility for doing their jobs reasonably well, not only for fear of losing them or in

the hope of higher earnings, but also because they are working in a recognised public service. The "civil servant" does feel some pride in being a civil servant, even if, as matters stand, he can be only the servant of a capitalist State.

It is not, however, enough to make men public servants and trust to that alone to make them feel responsible for giving of their best. In escaping the evils of profiteering, publicly owned industry may run into the evils of bureaucracy, unless it is intelligently organised. In a bureaucracy the men at the top confront those to whom they give orders no less externally than the owners of private businesses. Equally with the ordinary workers, the managers and officials in publicly owned industries are servants of the public ; but, instead of regarding the rest of the workers as fellow-servants, under bureaucracy they treat them as inferior beings. In bureaucratically organised public services, the position of the main body of the workers is assimilated to that of the employees of private business. Even if they have rather more security of tenure, they are not recognised as possessing rights of economic citizenship or any degree of collective responsibility. There is in France a familiar distinction between the superior civil servant, or *fonctionnaire, qui détient une partie du pouvoir publique*—who holds a part of the public power—and the inferior who does not. That distinction is of the essence of bureaucracy.

Under Socialism every "civil servant"—that is, every worker in a socialised industry or service—will be regarded as "holding a part of the public power." Every worker will be a recognised citizen of his industry as well as of the State, and of the factory or establishment in which he works as well as of the town or district in which he lives. Democratic self-government in industry will be set up as the logical and necessary correlative of political self-government. The community, as owner of the service, will lay down the

general line of the policy which is to be followed in administering it ; for the service must be so managed as to meet the public needs. But, having done this, the community will hand over the service to be actually controlled by the entire body of workers engaged in it, from the general managers at the top to the less skilled workers who are also indispensable to its working. Every public service will be organised as a self-governing guild or corporation, of which every worker will be a responsible and co-operating member.

At any rate, this is the only way of administering industry that seems to me compatible with a developed Socialist system. Democracy will not work except on the basis of trusting the people : nor is there any valid reason why anyone should profess democracy unless he is prepared to give the people his trust. But if the people are to be trusted politically, why not industrially as well ? Assuredly , the ordinary worker knows a good deal more about the industry he works in than about most political issues, and is no less fitted to be a citizen of his industry than of his State or town. Moreover, if we refuse men freedom and self-government in their daily work, how are we to expect them to develop the qualities which will make them good and useful citizens of the community as a whole ? Freedom breeds freedom, and servility breeds servility. If work is organised oligarchically under a handful of bureaucrats, bureaucracy will dominate politics as well. If, on the other hand, we trust men to act as responsible citizens of industry, we shall have gone a long way towards making them responsible citizens of the State and of society as a whole.

It is of course perfectly true that neither a factory nor a whole industry can be managed by a mass meeting or by referring everything that has to be settled to a mass vote. But the same thing is true of politics, where it is not

regarded as a convincing answer to the case for democratic self-government. In politics and in industry alike there must be leaders and administrators armed with enough authority to get their orders obeyed. There must be differences of power and degree of responsibility between one man and another, according to their several functions founded on differences of competence and capacity. But this is fully consistent with democracy and with the spirit of self-government we Socialists have in view for industry. I am not arguing that every worker engaged in an industry ought to have an equal voice in its conduct, any more than in politics I think every citizen ought to have an equal voice. But just as, in democratic countries, the citizens elect representatives to settle how the country is to be governed and who are to be the governors, so in industry I want leadership to come up from below by way of democratic election, and not be imposed from above as it is both under capitalism and under bureaucratic forms of public enterprise. By democratic election I mean the principle of one man one vote ; for though I do not want everyone to have an equal voice in the conduct of industry I do believe in equality in the choice of those who are to enjoy a superior influence.

Let us try to see in broad outline what a guild or corporation under Socialism would be like, and what would be its powers and its relations to the rest of the social structure. I have said already that I envisage it as including every worker engaged in the industry concerned, so that the entire personnel of the industry constitutes a self-governing fraternity of co-partners in a common service. When the guild is fully fledged—for I expect it to come into being by stages—I envisage all its members as choosing, by the democratic method of one man one vote, a National Council for the whole industry, as well as subordinate Councils for its various regions and for each separate

factory or establishment. The factory, or in some cases a group of neighbouring factories, would form the natural constituency unit for elections to the Regional Councils, the region for elections to the National Council. Conceivably in some instances, or at an intermediate state of development, the structure might be built up indirectly, the Factory Councils choosing the Regional Councils, and the Regional Councils sending their representatives to form the National Council. But in general I prefer the direct method, because it diffuses a larger responsibility among the whole membership of the Guild.

I do not suggest that these elected Councils should actually manage the industry or that they should be full-time bodies. Their purpose is to represent the general point of view of all the workers by hand and brain engaged in the industry, and they will do this best if they consist not of full-time representatives but of men and women who carry on their daily work in the industry side by side with those who elect them. The function, then, of these elected Councils is not to manage the industry, but to pass judgment on the management and to lay down general directives of policy. I do, however, suggest that the Councils should be responsible for appointing the actual managers, and that the managers should be responsible to them. I think the Factory Council should appoint the factory manager, unless it is found better to elect him too by a general vote of all the workers in the factory. The Regional Council, subject to a similar condition, should, I think, appoint the regional director or directing board ; and the National Council should appoint the directors who are to hold general managing authority over the industry as a whole.

As for the lesser officials, I have no fixed rule to offer. Where a post is mainly technical or advisory, the best method of appointment may be to leave the choice to the elected directors, subject to the approval of the appropriate

Council. Where, however, the post is of such a kind that its holder will be mainly concerned with issuing orders to other people, I want as far as possible direct election by those who are to be subject to his control. I want workmen as far as possible to elect their own foremen and supervisors, subject to such tests of technical competence as may be needed for each particular job—the workers being left to choose freely among duly qualified persons. I believe in a wide application of the principle of choice from below, though I hold that, when a choice has been made in this way, those who have made it have no right to dismiss the person they have chosen without giving him a right of appeal to some wider authority. For example a foreman might have a right of appeal to the whole Factory Council or a factory manager to the Regional Council of the industry.

Apart from this matter of elections I want the entire industry to be conducted as far as technical conditions allow on self-governing lines and with a minimum of centralisation, which nearly always brings bureaucracy in its train. Every opportunity should be taken of devolving power and responsibility—these two going together—upon groups of workers engaged together upon a common task. Groups or teams should be left as free as possible to organise their own work under their own chosen leaders on collective lines. Where it is a question in a workshop of distributing tasks or assigning jobs, the management should interfere as little as possible, and leave the workers to settle things as much as possible among themselves. Throughout the industry imposed discipline should be more and more replaced by collective self-discipline founded on a sense of common service. Officials will need to learn to regard themselves not as superiors imposed on “the workers” but as leaders freely co-operating with those who have chosen them out for the more responsible tasks.

To many people, used as they are to the idea that work can only be got by driving men and not by leading them, and to the methods of disciplining which express the spirit of capitalist autocracy, these proposals will doubtless seem impossibly utopian. Yet others will dismiss them on the ground that, whatever freedom and self-government may have been practicable for the old-style craftsman in the old-fashioned workshop, modern methods of mass production have irrevocably destroyed these things. Yet others will contend that the guild idea is all moonshine because the main body of the workers want, and always will want, nothing better than to get the day's work over as soon as possible and escape from the factory to what really interests them—the employment of their leisure hours. It will be argued "Self-government in industry will not work because most people do not want it ; and it will only destroy the present methods of forcing men to do a fair day's work without putting any effective alternative in their place."

Of course I do not contend that most workers to-day are moved by a strong desire for industrial self-government. It is perfectly plain that they are not—any more than most men or most women before the extension of the political franchise went about passionately desiring a voice in political affairs. The desire for democracy is not strong in most people, or democracy would have been universally established long ago and would be in no danger of being ever overthrown. Even to-day the number of people who interest themselves actively in politics is very small in relation to the whole number of citizens. That is a limitation upon democracy, but no argument at all against it—provided only that there are enough interested persons to make the democratic machine work. I have not, in order to uphold my case, to show that industrial self-government will succeed in enlisting the keen and active co-operation of all

the workers, but only that there will be enough keen and interested citizens of industry adequately to represent the whole body and to make the machine work. Of that I feel no doubt, when there has been time for men to learn a new tradition in a new atmosphere of political and economic freedom. There might be doubt of the guild system working if the guilds were to be set up suddenly and completely among men but newly escaped from the discipline of capitalism, unused to the idea of labour as collective service, and unable to find leaders whom they could trust both on the score of technical competence and of Socialist attitude. The new leadership will have to be evolved side by side with the new equality ; and the guilds will have to be developed out of transitional forms of public enterprise in which democratic self-government will have played a smaller but steadily increasing part.

All this is, of course, the merest outline, needing to be filled in at countless points when we set actually to work at bringing the guilds into existence. Each industry will have its own distinct problems to face, and one guild will differ widely from another according to the character of the service which it is to control. There will be mistakes made, and thereafter to be rectified, false starts to be retrieved, and fresh adaptations to be continually introduced as both technical conditions and human attitudes change. The last thing to be desired is that the guild structure should be rigid, or that we should set out to create it with an inflexible pattern in our minds. What matters is that we should set out determined to make each industry as fully a self-governing service as its technical conditions and the human nature of those engaged in it will allow it to be.

But now comes the objection that, even if enough people do want industrial self-government to make it practicable from that point of view, modern conditions of mechanised

mass production stand inexorably in the way of real industrial democracy. I believe this view to rest on a misunderstanding of the effects of modern productive technique. It is true that mass production has gone a long way towards destroying the individual craftsman's control of his job and has reduced greatly the proportion of highly skilled craftsmen to the total numbers employed in industry. But modern technique has also done a good deal towards reducing the quantity of quite unskilled labour by introducing mechanised methods of hauling things about, of cleaning up messes, and of giving routine assistance to the highly skilled workers. Mechanised production tends to substitute dexterous semi-skilled labour for skill and "unskill" alike. If it lops off some of the lofty trees, it also adds stature to the undergrowth. Apart from its effects on the demand for different sorts and degrees of skill, mechanisation tends to strengthen the collectiveness of the labour process. It tends to substitute the group for the individual as the unit of job control. In many of its aspects it positively lends itself to group operation, to collective control of the work by a co-operating group or squad of workers. The old-style craftsman used to rely on "mutuality"—that is, on the recognition of his claim to bargain individually with the support of his trade union behind him—for the establishment of his rights. But workers under the new conditions have more and more to act in groups and to substitute collective action for the individual action of the old-time aristocrats of labour.

This change, so far from putting difficulties in the way of an extension of workers' control, should actually help it forward, at any rate as soon as the aim of those in charge of industrial organisation is to encourage and not to repress the development of self-government in industry. In many mechanised processes, the individual worker has little or no control over the speed or quality of production, which

comes to depend more and more on the co-ordinated action of a complete group. The group, if it is given the chance, can in these circumstances exert a large measure of control over the conditions of work. At present, under capitalist auspices, it is usually prevented from doing this ; and the trade unions, not yet acclimatised to the new needs, and weakened by the persistence of unemployment and the breakdown of the old craft monopolies, have been unable in most cases to adapt their methods of collective bargaining to the changed conditions under which modern mechanised production is carried on. This has led to a common belief that workers' control has become inappropriate to modern conditions of production. But I believe it to be simply untrue that from a technical point of view the new industrialism is less suited to self-government than the old. It is better suited to just those forms of group action in a particular workshop or establishment which form the best, and indeed the only real, foundation for industrial self-government over the wider field of an entire industry.

Industrial self-government cannot, however, make large advances under a capitalist system which leaves big reserves of labour unemployed. For under such conditions it is highly dangerous for the more active workers to assert their claims to control. Those who do press for control are apt to find themselves on the streets before others whenever staffs are being cut down, and to meet with special difficulty in finding fresh employment. It is a perilous thing to be an active shop steward at a time when employers can pick and choose whom they will employ. If, however, industries were being conducted not with a view to maintaining the autocracy of capitalism but rather with the deliberate purpose of encouraging collective self-government by the employees, the technical conditions of modern production would actually offer greater and not less opportunities for democratic self-government than those

earlier craft techniques which set a wider distance between apprenticed craftsmen and unskilled labourers whom the craftsman no less than the employer felt he had an interest in keeping in their place. Modern industry, under conditions of mass production, is more equalitarian than the industry of the nineteenth century. In breaking down the limited monopolies of the skilled workers it has opened the way to an industrial democracy wide enough to include workers of all grades and kinds.

The gap has in fact grown narrower, not only between skilled and less skilled manual workers but also between manual craftsmen and non-manual employees. The proportion of salary-earners to manual wage-earners has shown a steady tendency to increase, and at the same time there has been a cultural as well as an economic assimilation between the two groups. Industry nowadays employs far more clerks and other "black-coats" than it used to do in relation to the numbers of manual workers. The wider diffusion of higher education has brought with it a relative cheapening of commercially educated employees, whose remuneration is nowadays often little and sometimes not at all above that of the more highly paid manual workers. The salary-earners, largely for reasons of snobbery, but also because their economic position is even more precarious if they lose their jobs, have hitherto been far more reluctant than the manual workers to form trade unions and to act collectively for the defence and improvement of their conditions. But circumstances are gradually forcing them more and more into alliance with the manual workers, though this tendency has so far manifested itself far more in politics than in the sphere of industrial bargaining.

At the same time the technicians, whose practical importance in industry has greatly increased with the development of mechanisation, have grown more critical of capitalism as it has shown itself less and less capable

of taking advantage of the rapidly advancing technical opportunities for the general diffusion of wealth. The technician, unlike the financier, instinctively looks at the economic problem from the standpoint of plenty. It is his function to enlarge the community's capacity for the creation of wealth ; but he is continually being thwarted in doing this by the efforts of the financial oligarchy to keep things scarce in order to maintain prices and profits. The technicians, no less than other black-coats, are held back at present by snobbery from identifying themselves with the manual workers ; and they have in addition a fear that the mass of manual workers whose labours they direct will fail to show any adequate appreciation of the need for technical changes involving a break with conservative habits and methods of work. Nevertheless there is among the technicians a growing discontent with a régime that is only too apt to smother any invention that does not appear to offer the inducement of higher profits and coerces them into abstention from producing more than the existing market bids fair to absorb at a price satisfactory to the financial interests.

In a planned Socialist economy the technician can rely on coming into his own. When the whole economic system is decisively directed to the twin objects of diffusing plenty and lightening labour, when no one has power to engender scarcity and all are set on making things cheap, the technical forces of production will be unloosed, and those who are best able to guide and direct these forces will be sure of honour and of full scope for their activities. The technician will be encouraged to make the machines whirr to his heart's content ; and he will be encouraged also, as he seldom is now, to pay attention to the making of machines that will ease the strain of labour as well as of those which will increase output or reduce its money cost. He will stand in a new relation to industry as the helper and adviser

of everyone engaged in it and no longer be compelled, as the servant of profit-makers, to labour for the enlargement of profit even at the cost of contracting human life.

Yet in gaining this position of greatly increased opportunity and honour, the technician will have something to give up—his snobbery and his sense of belonging to a superior social class. If under the present system he is near the top of the economic tree he will have also to suffer a loss of income in common with other members of the economically superior grades of capitalist society. As long as any man earns more than another, the technician will earn more ; for his service, as much as anyone's, calls for a special reward. But when the entire range of difference in incomes is narrowed, clearly the better paid technicians, especially those who have private incomes from property in addition to their salaries, must expect their total incomes to be scaled down. The Socialist does not profess to offer the technician any special exemption from the general policy of reducing economic inequality to the utmost practicable extent.

Socialism offers the technician not privilege but enlarged opportunity for service under conditions of security and at a reasonable standard of living. If the technician cares more for his job than for the class privilege which at present attaches to it, if he cares more about doing the best possible work for the public benefit than about being a superior person in a social and economic sense, then Socialism offers him his chance. On these terms, but on no others, it is right and necessary for Socialists to seek the support of the technicians and to appeal especially to them for support because they should have the clearest appreciation of the benefits which the full use of the resources of production could confer upon mankind.

There may, however, be other inhibitions in the technician's mind besides the fear of loss of income and of superi-

economic status. He may be afraid that, if industry is to be reorganised on principles of democratic self-government, his own group, being small in relative numbers, will receive scant consideration from the more numerous groups of manual and clerical workers. He may fear that, in exchanging capitalism for Socialism, he will only be acquiring a new intractable many-headed master in place of the financial interest which he is at present condemned to serve. The organised workers, he will urge, have in the past shown themselves on many occasions strong opponents of technical progress. Skilled craftsmen have opposed new inventions which have threatened to supersede their skill. The capitalist, rather than the worker, has been in fact the innovator, though capitalism has often opposed innovations where these have threatened profits. The workman, he will say, is an instinctive conservative, whereas he, the technician, is by instinct and training an innovator, always in search of new and better methods of production. Does not capitalism, with all its limitations, in practice give him wider scope for making and applying new inventions than industrial democracy will be likely to allow?

That workmen, like most other people, have strong conservative instincts is of course true enough. And it is also true that capitalism has been a great innovator in its day. But in earlier chapters I have given reasons for believing that twentieth century capitalism has passed from a progressive into a definitely restrictive phase, and is no longer prepared to offer the technicians and inventors the same scope that they used to be given. Capitalism becomes more and more intent on restricting output as it becomes more aware of the limitations of the market, and as the difficulties grow greater of finding an outlet for surplus products in the markets of the world. The technician certainly cannot rely on capitalism, as capitalism is now, to give him much scope for his desire to make the world a

place of plenty for all. Moreover, what passes for conservatism among the workers is in fact largely self-protection. Who would not take up a conservative attitude towards industrial innovation if innovation threatened to destroy the market for the skill on which his entire means of living depended? Who would not oppose the introduction of new machines if new machines came threatening him with lower wages or with unemployment or with more nerve-racking and irksome forms of toil? Let us not forget that new inventions under capitalism do in most cases confront some sections of the workers with threats of this order. They endanger and continually overthrow the sectional monopolies of labour which certain skilled trades have been able to build up after long struggles. Technical innovation appears to the skilled workman far more pregnant with the threat of unemployment than with the promise of greater plenty.

If new inventions meant to the workers plainly and directly more wealth and more leisure, and not less employment and lower wages, the "instinctive conservatism" of which we are so often told would not indeed wholly disappear, but would be far more than offset by the desire to secure these benefits. Some conservatism on the part of the workers—some resistance to continual chopping and changing of the forms of labour—is not at all a bad thing, if only it be not pushed too far; for technicians are not immune from the disease of getting the fidgets and wanting to turn everything upside down again and again in the course of their fascinating experiments. It is by no means a bad thing that there should be forces strong enough to stop the technicians from getting matters all their own way. But can anyone really doubt that on the whole a society in which higher production meant directly and universally a higher standard of living would be far readier and more eager to act on the technicians' ideas than a society in

which many rich men worship scarcity as a means to profit and many poor men treat innovation as the potential destroyer of their means of living.

In the guilds there will have to be a special place for the technicians. In the final choice of those who are to direct industry, as far as this choice is made by election at all, I do not think the technician's vote should count for more than anyone else's. But when Councils or Boards are debating about industrial policy, the technicians' voice does deserve to be specially heard. Necessarily the persons who will be chosen to direct and manage industry will be drawn to a large extent from the technical groups ; for it will no longer be the fashion to put financial rather than industrial specialists at the head of great productive concerns. But apart from this the technicians will be everywhere present as advisers and makers of plans upon which the controlling bodies will thereafter pass judgment. The true functions of the technical man are advisory and administrative rather than directive of policy in a final sense. The decision of policy is a matter for all those whom policy will affect : it calls for democratic control. But the democracy needs advisers ; and in matters of industrial method the technician is in by far the best position for giving it advice.

Naturally, side by side with the guild organisation, both technicians and manual workers practising a common craft will keep in being their own professional unions and societies. The need for trade unions to express the common consciousness of all the members of a trade and to formulate their collective aspirations will not cease with the coming of self-governing institutions for the conduct of industry. Nor will the desire for professional association cease : indeed it is likely to become stronger as the technicians set to work more assiduously and with less hindrance upon the conquest of nature, working no longer one against another in the service of rival capitalist firms, but as servants of a

community unitedly set on expanding its productive power. There will be no trade secrets or hampering patents to keep the whole body of scientific workers from pooling their knowledge to the fullest possible extent ; and their professional societies will be needed both to organise this collaboration and to train the new generation of technical experts both for factory work and for research, and also to lay down and improve the standards of professional behaviour and organise the various bodies of professionals for the best service of the economic system as a whole.

I feel no doubt of the active co-operation of the technicians in the working of a Socialist society when once it has been brought into being. But what is needed is that the technicians, or a good many of them, should give their whole-hearted help from now on in planning and bringing into existence the new Socialist economic order. Socialism needs planning not only by theorists like myself or by trade unionists or active Labour politicians, but also by practical industrial experts well abreast of modern productive technique and able to advise about the best forms and methods of socialisation and industrial development. The planning of Socialism is largely a technical problem, which is bound to be done amateurishly unless a large number of technical experts are prepared to help in working out what the plans are to be. But the technician who agrees to help, must be prepared to collaborate on Socialist terms as an equal among others who will contribute their several experiences and points of view, and not as a superior person issuing inspired commands to those whose qualities and qualifications are different from his own.

At present the manual workers are often suspicious of the technicians, whom they tend inevitably to regard as "employers' men." The technician so often confronts them in the factory of to-day as the instrument through whom the employer threatens their livelihood, or speeds them up,

or increases the unpleasantness of labour. The technician is paid by the employer, and he has to act in the employer's financial interest. But I believe the manual workers are very ready even now to listen to technicians whom they regard as being plainly on their side ; and as fast as industries are reorganised as public services, with no financial interest to destroy the unity of those who are responsible for carrying them on, the road will be open for the closest collaboration between the technicians and their fellow-workers in the common task of making production as easy and efficient as science can hope to make it.

This, then, is my hope for Socialist industry. I look forward to a form of economic self-government in which every type of worker by hand and brain will be able to play his distinctive part, in which every worker will be able to regard himself as a co-partner with all the rest in a common service, and in which the self-direction of each industry will be co-ordinated and reconciled with the general interest of the entire people.

That brings me to a second point. I have tried to set down in outline what the guilds will be like and what they will do ; but I have so far said very little of their organic relationship to society as a whole. Now, clearly in a democratic community no guild or industrial corporation can be absolutely self-governing and independent. The function of the guild is to organise production ; but production has to be carried on for the benefit not of the producers as such, but of all the citizens. This implies a demarcation of authority and function between the guilds as internally autonomous bodies and the representatives of the entire community, within whose power it must be to prescribe the general policy which each industry is to follow. The guilds can be left to decide for themselves neither what they will produce, nor what prices they will charge, nor what they will pay their members for the work of production. All these matters

will have to be settled, or at any rate decisions about them will have to be co-ordinated and ratified, from the stand-point of the whole body of citizens.

Our Socialist community will need, then, a National Planning Authority, or series of authorities, entrusted with the functions of deciding what is to be produced, what prices are to be charged, and on what principles incomes are to be distributed to all the citizens. In this small book I have no space to discuss in any detail the nature of the planning machinery needed for these purposes ; but I have dealt with these questions at some length elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Here it is enough to say that, whatever advisory bodies of experts may be needed actually to draw up the details of the national plan, and whatever executive bodies of competent administrators to supervise its actual working, the final decisions on all essential points of principle must clearly be made in such a way as to carry full democratic assent. They must be reached by a body, or by bodies, which can reasonably claim to represent all the citizens. No other method of making them will comply with the fundamental requirements of democracy, or ensure that the general economic plan shall be drawn up with a view to promoting the greatest possible happiness and welfare of the greatest number.

I envisage, then, a general planning authority, or series of authorities, either directly representing the entire people or directly responsible to the representatives of the entire people. If a planned Socialist economy retains the parliamentary system of government, Parliament itself must be the final authority for approving the economic plan, including not only the plan of production but also the planned distribution of incomes among the entire body of citizens. If some other form of representative government supersedes Parliament, upon it will fall the responsibility

<sup>1</sup> See my *Principles of Economic Planning*.

for giving democratic endorsement to the principles of the plan.

But Parliament or any alternative body representing all the citizens clearly could not itself prepare or draw up an economic plan, but only approve or reject it. There will have to be, for the initial formulation of the general plan, some sort of advisory National Planning Commission such as exists already in the U.S.S.R. ; and this body will have to work on a basis of draft plans submitted to it by the controlling authorities of the separate industries and services—that is, in a fully fledged Socialist system, of the guilds. The guilds would make their plans for output, prices and terms of employment. The Planning Commission would co-ordinate the drafts sent up by the various guilds and prepare a comprehensive draft for the economy as a whole.

I envisage this National Planning Commission primarily as an expert body of full-time workers ; for I cannot see how else it is to get its work done. But I also envisage it, when it has prepared its draft—of course in consultation at all stages with the various sectional bodies which have laid their proposals before it—calling a general gathering of representatives of all the guilds and of all other bodies directly interested in the formulation of the plan. I assume that trade unions, professional associations and some other bodies such as the co-operative societies would be represented at this gathering, which would have the task of approving from the producers' point of view a final draft of the Plan to be sent on for consideration by Parliament, or its successor as the political authority representing the entire body of citizens.

Of course the forms which I have here outlined are not the only possible forms of machinery for securing the correspondence of the economic plan both with the producers' capacities and with the consumers' needs. I do

not profess to be able to forecast with any confidence precisely how a planned Socialist economy would decide to organise the machinery of production ; and both the few words I have said here and the more detailed proposals which I have given elsewhere<sup>1</sup> are intended rather to illustrate principles than to lay down dogmatically how they can best be applied. But I hope I have said enough even here to show very broadly how it is possible for a Socialist society to reconcile workers' self-government in industry with the conduct of production for the greatest benefit of the whole people, and how in doing so it will be able to enlist on the side of productive efficiency that whole-hearted co-operation of the workers which any bureaucratically administered system, even if it rested on public ownership, would be unable to secure. Democracy cannot drive men : it has to put its trust in giving them freedom and in encouraging them by fair dealing and the offer of responsible self-government to use that freedom in the common service of all.

<sup>1</sup> In my *Principles of Economic Planning* (1935). See also my *Self-Government in Industry* (1917).

## CHAPTER IX

### SOCIALISM AND POLITICS

THE INHABITANTS of Great Britain have become used to parliamentary government. They have come to take it as a matter of course that Parliament should make the laws and that the executive Government should require the support of a parliamentary majority. Moreover, despite the continued existence and large obstructive powers of the House of Lords, most people, when they think of Parliament, nowadays think instinctively of the House of Commons. A member of that House is called M.P. and not M.H.C. ; and though we know that the power of making laws rests with the " King in Parliament " and not with the House of Commons alone, most of us correctly regard the House of Commons as the source of all important innovations in the art of government.

In this Great Britain is different in some degree from all the other great States. No other country has ever got used as we have to taking the parliamentary system for granted. The United States regards its popularly elected President even more than Congress as the fount of public policy. France has been through too many and too recent revolutions for her parliamentary institutions to have become for her citizens a matter of course. The other great States have only experimented in Parliamentarism and never settled down under it. Only among smaller States—the Scandinavian countries, Holland and Switzerland, for example, and the British Dominions—is there a

parliamentary system rooted as deeply in the national consciousness as our own.

Of course, Parliamentarism is by no means the same thing as democracy. For a far longer period than it has been even in form democratic, the British Parliament was expressly the organ of the British aristocracy. The Lords were the ennobled gentlefolk, the Commons the unennobled ; there was no question of representing the common man, only at most of admitting the unaristocratic wealthy within the circle of the governing class. The "rotten borough" of the eighteenth century was defended explicitly on the ground that it enabled the rich merchant to buy a seat in Parliament, and thus helped to provide by a back door for the representation of those propertied interests which would otherwise be left out. The idea that men, merely as men, had a right to representation was mooted in the seventeenth century, though it became at that stage somewhat confused with the idea that good men as good men alone had a right to share in the government. But in the eighteenth century the idea of representation as a right of all men, or even of all good men, was almost lost until the French Revolution had given it new foundations in the world of reality. Manhood suffrage went far beyond the dreams of most of the early reformers in Great Britain ; and long after the French Revolution the Whig reformers of 1832 still stopped far short of it. Chartist s fought for it in vain : the later Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884 still based the right to representation on the possession of some sort of "stake in the country," though they widened the electorate far more than the great Reform Act of 1832. Only in 1918 was manhood suffrage practically admitted, together with the first instalment of "votes for women." Sex discrimination persisted even after that till the younger women were finally enfranchised in 1928.

British Parliamentarism is far more deeply rooted in

the national tradition than British democracy, which is beside it no more than a recent upstart. But precisely because the lesser gentry and the merchants had successfully asserted themselves against the nobles long before the advent of popular suffrage, the "people," when it was at length enfranchised, stepped in the more easily to take up the heritage of British aristocracy. The "popular" House of Commons assumed the prestige of its gentlemanly predecessor. It even inherited something of its gentility, absorbing the new elements that kept on rising up from below into its traditions of right behaviour and leisured lack of hustle. On the whole this added to its strength, for it enabled the Englishman to become a parliamentary democrat without ceasing to be a snob. It also helped the House of Lords to survive and to retain real obstructive powers. For if the Lords had been more powerful against the unennobled gentlemen, they would probably have stood out to the end against reform in 1832, and been swept away.

That they did not, and that the Crown did not, and that Lords and Crown remain essential parts of the legislative machine to-day are vital facts for British Socialists to take note of when they are considering the conditions of a fundamental change in the British social system. For though most people in Great Britain think of the House of Commons as the fount of legislation and the source of the Government's authority, they do not therefore think of it as opposed to the other elements in the Constitution or as possessing an exclusive right of control, save in the very last resort. They expect laws to come to them from the House of Commons, but they expect them to come in due constitutional form, with the full endorsement of the King in Parliament behind them. The House of Lords is, indeed, far weaker in prestige than the Crown. If the Lords were to stand out alone against a House of

Commons possessing a clear electoral mandate, they would almost certainly be beaten with ease. But the outcome—at any rate the immediate outcome—would be by no means so certain if Lords and Crown were at one in opposing a majority of the “Lower House,” or if the Crown alone stood out against a majority in the Commons. In the long run, if the majority of the electors really wanted what the Crown or the Crown and Lords together were opposing, the electors would get their way. But this implies a steady and persistent electoral majority—not merely a passing victory for the “popular” party at the polls. It might be possible to work up enough feeling against the “unrepresentative” House of Lords to secure a reaffirmation of the popular mandate if the Lords stood alone, and their obstruction could be plainly dissociated from the attitude of the Crown. But in 1910, when this issue was raised, the Liberal and Labour Parties merely held their own at the ensuing election and gained no fresh accession of strength, by campaigning against the House of Lords. If the Crown, as well as the Lords, had taken the field against them, I think they would have been beaten, at any rate for the time. And at present, if a Labour majority in the House of Commons, pursuing a Socialist policy, came up against the veto of the Crown, or if a refusal by the Crown to help it to override the Lords’ veto brought the Crown into the conflict against the Labour Party, I think the ensuing General Election would in all probability result in a Labour defeat.

Of course the opponents of Socialism in Great Britain are fully alive to the danger which the winning of a victory by bringing in the Crown would involve. The bee’s sting is more formidable than the wasp’s, but the saying goes that it is left in the wound. Reaction could make sure of one triumph if it could get the Crown’s aid, but it could by no means make equally certain of a second. And would the

Crown risk everything by abetting reaction against the clearly declared will of the electors save in the very last resort, after all other expedients had clearly failed? At some stage the parliamentary Labour Party, if it advances towards Socialism, is bound to come up against the Crown; for Monarchy and Socialism are obviously incompatible. But it is easy to understand both why constitutional Socialists would greatly prefer that this conflict should come as late as possible in the course of the transition, and why the opponents of Socialism are reluctant to invoke the Crown's authority until they have exhausted all other means of defending capitalism against the Socialist attack. As long as the danger of Socialism remains remote enough for its enemies not to be driven into desperate resistance, because they remain hopeful of holding their own by less dangerous means, the Crown is likely to remain "unpolitical," though nothing can prevent it from being used as a means of appealing to human snobbery against democratic levelling.

Parliamentary Socialism, well aware of the Crown's appeal to mass sentiment, will certainly avoid challenging the Monarchy till it must. Politically I daresay this attitude is right; but in this book I am less concerned with immediate parliamentary strategy than with Socialist objectives. I am unable to see how any convinced Socialist can avoid being a republican. For even if the *political* innocuousness of the Crown could be guaranteed—which it certainly cannot—the *social* objections to Monarchy would retain all their force. A King connotes a Court and an aristocracy. Monarchy involves not merely the recognition, but the positive encouragement of a snobbish respect for class distinctions. King and Court without dukes and earls and hereditary everything-on-earth-in-waiting are surely inconceivable. Socialism, standing for a classless society, cannot co-exist with Monarchy—and could

not even if the political convenience of the State having a crowned rather than an uncrowned head could be convincingly demonstrated.

There are, I am well aware, strong objections to a President, even if he holds office only for a few years and is incapable of re-election for a further term. But why have a President? Why should the State have a head—that is, a single, personal head—to represent it? One favourite argument is that for occasions of ceremony there must be a pre-eminent person to symbolise the unity of the State. I fail to see why there should, or what functions such a head performs beyond what would be performed far less objectionably if they were shared out between, say, the Prime Minister, the Speaker of the House of Commons, and the Chairman of the Supreme Economic Council. I know it is argued in Great Britain that the lack of a personal head of the State would break up the British Empire, because constitutional Monarchy has the advantage of allowing the self-governing Dominions to combine "loyalty to the Crown" with complete practical independence. I do not desire the break-up of the self-governing Empire; for I have no wish that the number of separate States in the world should be increased, with their claims to absolute sovereignty and to the right of going to war with whom they please. But would the disappearance of the Monarchy really break up the Empire? I very much doubt it. I do not see why the Dominions should be either more or less attached to the British connection than they are now if the Crown were put into commission, and the "bond of Empire" became a purely impersonal thing.

But even if I were wrong on this point, I should not as a Socialist be prepared to tolerate Monarchy at the behest of the Dominions. Monarchy is a flat contradiction of class equality, or rather classlessness, and therefore a denial of Socialism. Monarchy may disappear early or late in the

course of the transition to Socialism : that depends on political circumstances and on the degree of circumspectness with which the powers of the Monarchy are used. But, early or late, if Socialism is to come, Monarchy is bound to go. Socialism is quintessentially republican.

The House of Lords stands on a different footing. Few except its own members, their wives, their cousins and their aunts, and those who hope to obtain peerages, feel any sentimental attachment to it ; and, if it can be isolated, it can be easily overthrown. From the standpoint of practical politics, it is far more than the Crown an immediate and continual nuisance. Reinforced by new peers drawn almost exclusively from the capitalist classes, it is ludicrously biased against social legislation ; and it serves no purpose save that of watch-dog for the sacred " rights of property." It will certainly never acquiesce without giving battle even in the most gradual advance towards Socialism that is really an advance ; and, apart from major acts of resistance, as long as it survives it will put an enormous amount of minor obstruction and delay in the path of any Government that is even mildly socialistic. There is, accordingly, every reason for coming to grips with it at the earliest possible moment—at the very latest as soon as it attempts to hold up any major Socialist measure and thus provides a Socialist Government with a cry suitable for rallying the country behind the demand for its abolition. The House of Lords is likely to disappear long before the Monarchy ; and its disappearance will leave the Monarchy perched more insecurely than at present upon its lonely eminence.

As for the House of Commons, I feel sure that the attempt will be made to use it as an instrument for the achievement of Socialism before any attempt is made by other methods. Nor do I feel by any means assured, as some of my friends do, that such an attempt is doomed to failure. The House

of Commons, as it exists to-day, is no doubt an absurdly time-wasting and unbusinesslike institution ; for, with any amount of major changes waiting to be carried through, it persistently wastes its valuable time on trifles, and still employs an obsolete procedure which came down to it from a time when current legislation for the most part raised no vital questions of principle. The methods of legislation require drastic overhauling in order to adapt them to modern needs. But why should they not be adapted, and the familiar instrument of legislation preserved ? If we want to alter the basis of the social system it will assuredly be very much easier to alter it with some approach to consent by bringing the changes under the respectable auspices of that old and time-honoured institution, Parliament.

If we were given a clean sheet and called upon to write upon it to-day a totally new constitution for Great Britain, we should probably devise an instrument very different in character from the House of Commons. But we are called upon, not to write upon a clean sheet, but to revise and amend an ancient palimpsest. We cannot afford, if we can avoid it, to throw away the instruments of government to which men are accustomed. For most men will accept change much more readily if it comes to them clothed in forms to which they have been in the habit of extending obedience. The situation would be different if British parliamentarism had broken down as the old system of autocratic government had broken down in Russia, or if the system were in its nature so undemocratic as to be clearly incapable of adaptation to democratic needs. But the House of Commons is a going concern ; and it is in form democratic enough to be used as an instrument of equalitarian ideas. There is the greatest possible advantage in using the House of Commons to the fullest possible extent as our political instrument for achieving

Socialism, if only the House of Commons can be so adapted as to speed up its procedure and make it capable of transcending its present limitations.

Clearly, however, the House of Commons cannot be used in this way unless its methods of action can be drastically revised. In these days a prodigious output of new legislation is needed every year for no more than keeping the existing system in working order. Great Britain in the twentieth century is a country in which Parliament has to run very fast merely in order to stay in the same place. But we Socialists, who are determined to set on foot a new social system, are bound, while the change is being made, to require the passing of far more new laws than our capitalist opponents feel any need to enact. If we attempt to pass these laws by the traditional parliamentary methods of law-making, the only possible result will be a quite inextricable congestion and confusion at the centre. We shall get nothing done because we shall be trying to do far more than can be done with the aid of the existing machine. But we cannot be content with attempting less; for, when Socialism begins to come at all, it will have to come with a rush. One change will call insistently and immediately for other changes: we shall find that in amending one part of the existing system we have thrown a number of other parts out of alignment: we shall have to go on to put a dozen things straight for every one which we have set out with conscious purpose to alter. There will be no going back without admission of defeat: we shall not be able, even temporarily, to slow down the pace without throwing away our chances of success. The more things seem to be going wrong, the more we shall have to do in order to right them. The House of Commons is bound to be kept hard at it, however drastically we simplify its procedure and speed up its methods of getting things done.

There is only one way out of this dilemma—to cut out the

details and to concentrate the attention of Parliament on questions of principle alone. Bills will have to be shorter—very much shorter—than they usually are at present. They will have to be got through at greater speed, with less expenditure of time in considering amendments on points of detail. Parliament will have to pronounce on broad questions of principle, leaving the details of their application to be filled in elsewhere.

But there must be an "elsewhere," and it must not be merely a government department. A Parliament that sets out to realise democracy cannot renounce details in order to hand them over to a body of bureaucrats. If Acts are to be shortened, the amplification of them must not be done merely by Orders and Regulations drawn up by civil servants and approved by Cabinet Ministers without democratic scrutiny. It is of little avail to prescribe that such Orders and Regulations must lie for so many days "upon the table of the House." Even if they do, but few Members of Parliament will have time or interest to look at them; and if they are objectionable, Parliament itself will have no time to spare for putting them right. If we mean to employ democratic methods, we must devise subordinate organs of democratic enactment capable of amplifying and applying declaratory Acts of Parliament in such ways as to make them workable, and of dealing with special cases and problems that Parliament lacks time—and often competence—to determine or adjust.

What forms are these subordinate "legislatures" to be given? They will be, I think, for the most part *ad hoc* bodies, formed to deal with the application of some particular Act, or at most of some group of Acts bearing on a related group of questions. Suppose Parliament has passed a brief Education Act raising the school-leaving age and prescribing the provision of secondary education for all. The details in such a case will be best filled out by an *ad hoc*

body chosen to represent the Local Education Authorities, which will actually have to carry the reforms into effect, the organised teachers, the Universities, and any other groups which have special interests in the forms of educational development. A body of this sort could submit its draft Orders and Regulations to Parliament ; and these Orders and Regulations would then become law together with the original Act upon which they were founded, unless Parliament rejected them or referred them back for redrafting.

Or suppose Parliament had passed a short Act for the socialisation of the coal mines. There would be many things to be settled—about the form and amount of any compensation to be allowed to the past owners, the methods of administration and control to be applied to the socialised industry, and so on. Again an *ad hoc* body could be set up, so as to represent first the already socialised industries most directly concerned, such as the electricity service, and perhaps by that time the railways as well, secondly the principal groups of coal consumers, thirdly the coal miners and mining technicians, and fourthly a number of other bodies, including the local authorities for the mining areas, the Trades Union Congress, and such other interested groups as Parliament might think fit to order to be summoned. Through this body again there would be drafted for submission to Parliament a scheme embodying the Orders and Regulations necessary for carrying out the general principles laid down in the declaratory Act.

I feel sure that some change of this sort is the only way of making a parliamentary system serve as the instrument for a fundamental change in the structure of society. If, in addition, consultations with interested groups can take place *before* a Bill is introduced at all into Parliament, so much the better. The general provisions of the Bill, as well as the details, can then be made a matter of consultation

with the groups specially concerned. But even where this is done, consultation with these groups, and extra-parliamentary drafting of the Orders and Regulations needed to give effect to the general principles laid down by Parliament, will be essential to the application of any major measure after it has passed through the House of Commons.<sup>1</sup>

If we are prepared to adjust parliamentary procedure to changing social needs in some such way as this, I see no final reason why a reformed Parliament should not be used as the main instrument for introducing a Socialist system, at any rate in the earlier stages. The real doubt about this rests on the doubt whether men, if they are called upon to make use of a traditional instrument, will in fact show courage and imagination enough to break away from traditional methods of using it. The parliamentary machine may easily come to dominate them instead of their dominating the machine.

There is, however, no conclusive reason why this should happen. The machine can be adapted and used to good purpose—if Socialists have but the wit to adapt and use it. There is no more an inherent superiority of Soviet over Parliament than of Parliament over Soviet. The chief difference between them is that men have got used to the one and not to the other. Where a change of system has to be made by revolutionary action involving a sharp break with the old order and a sudden and complete change over to the new, it is doubtless of advantage to employ a novel instrument. For revolutionary fervour will rally most readily to a loyalty that presents itself as in essence new. But if the change is to be attempted by constitutional means and without quite so sharp a break, there is a strong case for adapting old instruments wherever we can, and for building on old loyalties, while converting them to new

<sup>1</sup> For a further discussion of this question see my essay on "The Method of Social Legislation" in *Economic Tracts for the Times*.

ends, instead of scrapping everything and trying to make a fresh start.

Any time of transition is bound to be a time of intensive legislative activity. There is so much to be done in due form of law in making the change from one social system to another. But when the essential structure of the new Socialist society has been established, it is reasonable to hope for a sharp falling off in the output of new laws involving drastic readjustments of the social order. There will, of course, be no cessation of law-making, for there is no finality about a Socialist system. But, after the great change, we may expect legislation, whatever forms it may take, to become for a time mainly, as it has been usually under capitalism, a matter of piecemeal progressive adaptation to gradual processes of economic and social change—of improving upon what is, rather than reversing sharply the trends of existing policy. Parliament can then, if it so desires, resume some of its old attention to detail. But I very much doubt if it will, for the essence of a democratic assembly representing the entire people is that it is far better fitted to prescribe general principles and particular policies than to elaborate detailed applications which necessarily call for many diverse sorts of expert knowledge and experience. No democratic assembly representing the entire people can hope to command this range of expert knowledge without sacrificing its essential character of representing the common man. The democratic way of handling details is not to confide their formulation to a body which *ex hypothesi* knows little about them, but to devise democratic ways of consulting those who do know about each particular problem that needs to be settled, and then submitting the results of this consultation to the best available form of democratic control.

I fancy that Parliament, if it can be induced to accept these salutary limitations upon its sphere of action, will

soon find the vexed problem of congestion of business miraculously solved. Indeed, I doubt whether, when once the intensive period of transition is over, Parliament, or whatever legislative authority may by then have replaced it, will need to meet nearly so often as it does to-day. It would gain and not lose democratic authority if, instead of consisting largely of professional politicians, it could be composed of men and women who spent the major part of their time doing other things. I should like to see the legislature after the transition made up far more largely of men and women who were also active local or regional councillors, leading figures in guilds or trade unions or professional associations or co-operative bodies, or in some other activity in regular touch with wide bodies of functional constituents, as well as with the body of electors who had chosen them to sit in the legislative chamber. Under existing conditions the "twicer" is an abuse: under Socialism the more "twicers" there are the better democracy is likely to work.

As for the ordinary man's relation to politics, this will necessarily alter as the community passes through the successive phases of the transition to Socialism. While the critical changes are being made, political excitements are bound to run high and divisions of opinion to be extreme and violent. Even if many individuals from the privileged classes take the side of Socialism, the main body of these classes is not likely to give up its claims without a hard struggle; and in the heat of the conflict many who have hitherto been lukewarm politicians will be drawn in energetically on the one side or the other. But as men settle down under the new conditions—for I am here assuming that the victory is with Socialism—these political excitements will tend to die down, and a great many men and women whose natural interest is far less in politics than in other things will cease to be "politically-minded"

with more than a fraction of their minds, and will again, for the most part leave politics to the "busybodies," and get on with whatever they fancy more.

There is nothing to be alarmed at in this prospect ; for why should most people bother their heads greatly about politics unless political affairs are in a mess ? Much introspection is a sign of mental illness in the individual ; and much " politicospection " is equally a sign that there is something wrong with the body politic. If democracy is to work, there must be enough men and women who take a continual interest in political affairs to run the machine and to make elections a reality. So, I am sure, there will be ; for, given a wide diffusion of good education among the citizens, I feel sure there will be found among them quite enough politically-minded individuals to keep in check what Walt Whitman called " the never-ending audacity of elected persons." As for the rest, let them paint, play, sing, write, research, amuse themselves, to their hearts' content—provided only that each contributes in his individual way a fair quota towards filling up the sum of collective happiness. There is no need for all individuals to be active politicians except in times of crisis, when every citizen is called upon to enlist himself either for or against the great change. As soon as the general character of the social system is for the time being decisively settled, a Socialist society will aim at leaving each citizen as free as possible to follow his peculiar bent. Politics, like economics, will recede into its appropriate place. A political or economic system which is out of order is as disturbing as an ill-behaved digestion to the life of man. Once the system is in order, we are free to give it only enough of our attention to prevent it from going wrong again.

## CHAPTER X

### THE SOCIALIST MOVEMENT

SOCIALISM is at the same time a creed and a movement. It is on the one hand a body of ideas and projects for the better arrangement of men's ways of living together in society, and on the other a complex of individuals and organisations more or less keenly and decisively engaged in promoting these ideas. I do not mean merely that Socialism, as a body of ideas finds practical expression in a movement for their furtherance. I mean much more than that. The movement, as well as the ideas, is Socialism. The ideas and policies grow out of the movement as much as the movement grows out of the ideas. The Socialist movement does not simply stand for the ideas of certain Socialist thinkers : these thinkers are themselves interpreters of the movement, translating its hopes and endeavours into articulate theories of social regeneration.

It is difficult for anyone who is not in and of the Socialist movement—and even for some who are in it—fully to appreciate this fact. The purely intellectual Socialist, or he who fancies himself such, never does appreciate it. It is, however, a vital part of the experience not only of those leaders who have been best able to enlist the love and loyalty of their fellow-Socialists, but at least as much of countless men and women who perform day in and day out the incessant detailed work of Socialist organisation and propaganda. Most of this work is wholly unpaid ; and much of it still involves hardship and even positive danger. The "agitator" is less secure in his job than the

"loyal" worker or the upholder of things as they are. The real agitator may get compensation in the sense of power which he draws from the applause of his hearers or from the leadership of a strike or a demonstration of protest. But a very great deal of the unpaid work that is done by thousands of men and women for the cause of Socialism is devoid of these attractions. It is a grind of voluntary labour for which most often no applause and no thanks are given. We are apt to comfort ourselves with the delusion that by a merciful dispensation of providence some people like doing dull jobs. They would doubtless rather do them "for the cause" than leave them undone; but in most cases the attraction is the cause and not the dull job that is done for its sake.

To these thousands of very ordinary people the cause of Socialism stands for human fellowship. I do not of course suggest that Socialism has any monopoly of this kind of devotion, which is an invariable concomitant of any "cause," or of the work of any group that has in it the faculty of arousing human loyalty. It is found in Churches, in philanthropic work of every kind, and in every sort of club or society that becomes a focus of group sentiment as well as of group interest. It is of very varying strength in different cases. But wherever it appears at all, men and women are lifted out of themselves into conduct expressive of their sentiment of unity with others. From the standpoint of society as a whole, many of these exercises of loyalty may be merely expressions of group self-interest; and it is undeniable that loyalty and devotion can serve anti-social as well as social ends. "Honour among thieves" is an old saying. But that is beside my point, which is simply that Socialism has been one very powerful force arousing this sort of devotion, and that without this devotion Socialism would not merely be impotent but would not be Socialism at all.

For this sentiment of loyalty which Socialism arouses is ready to embrace all mankind. It is not, like most group loyalties, exclusive. It aims not at the use or preservation but at the destruction of exclusive privilege. Actually it stops far short of including everybody, for it extends in any full sense only to those who are felt to be within the circle of Socialism. Socialism is *for* everybody, but Socialist fellowship is an experience for Socialists alone. It is, however, a vital point that, like the universal religions, the Socialist movement does set out to bring everybody within the circle both of the movement and of the society which it is seeking to create. It shuts out no one who does not voluntarily exclude himself. There is, in Socialism, no predestined body of the elect. It is of its essence a missionary gospel with a message for all mankind.

This may seem not to square with the notion that, according to Karl Marx, the class of proletarians is the "elect"—the predestined harbinger of the Socialist victory. It is true that Marxism assigns to the proletariat the chief historical rôle in social emancipation, and that Socialism is to that extent a class movement. The working class provides the centre round which Socialists are bidden rally for the struggle. The sentiment of loyalty which Socialism stirs up in men is in a special sense loyalty to the working class in its struggle against exploitation. But side by side with this loyalty to the working class, which is a sentiment open to proletarians and non-proletarians alike, Socialism embodies a second loyalty of all conscious Socialists one to another. The working man who is not a Socialist participates in the first of these loyalties through his class affiliations : he has no share as an individual in the second.

This mingling of loyalties gives the Socialist movement a very special quality. There is, first of all, the special and highly personal loyalty of one Socialist to another—which

would make it very difficult for me, for example, to regard anyone who was not some sort of a Socialist as, in a final and intimate sense, my friend, however much I might like him or get on with him in a social way. There is, secondly, the loyalty to the wider movement, which includes not only all conscious Socialists, but the entire working class—everyone who is so placed as to be, consciously or unconsciously, on the side of the forces that are making for Socialism. This is the loyalty which puts the Socialist on the side of strikers even when a strike seems to him unwise ; on the side of unemployed demonstrators or Indian factory workers or Chinese "reds" or American negroes in the Southern States, however little he may know of the particular quarrel in which they may be engaged ; on the side, in fact, of all the exploited and oppressed groups and classes all over the world, wherever he can recognise in them any affinity at all to the cause with which he is more nearly concerned.

It is quite true that, under stress, either of these loyalties can fail. Of the failure of the first there is no lack of tragic instances in the history of the past two decades. The mutual enmities of Communists and Social Democrats, fatally defeating the larger working-class movement, have played havoc with the cause of Socialism. Italy has been handed over to Fascism, Germany to the still worse terror and obscurantism of the Nazis. In Spain working-class disunity has opened the way for the return of reaction to power. There is no such perfervid anti-Bolshevik as a Russian Socialist exile, and no one has been so ready to denounce Social Democratic or trade union leaders as "social traitors" as an emissary of the Communist International. Socialist fraternity is apt, under too great a strain, to dissolve into vicious dissensions which recall the excesses of the religious struggles during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Yet it would be no less foolish, on these grounds, to deny the fact of Socialist fraternity than to deny that behind the struggles of Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists and Armenians did lie a real unity of Christendom. That makes half the tragedy of the wars of religion. Any strong faith, be it in Christianity or in Socialism, has power for evil as well as for good—power to rend men asunder into warring factions as well as to unite them for a common cause. To the immediate disputants their points of contention seem so vastly important—as making all the difference between salvation and damnation, between world regeneration and world defeat—that the unity of ideals is almost lost to sight. The perspective of history is different. For when passion is dead and gone the intellectual differences that held men asunder are apt to seem small beside the deeper unity of their beliefs. The historians of the future will have cause to record the furies of internecine Socialist warfare. But they will also undoubtedly recognise the underlying unity of Socialist aims. We cannot tell whether they will be able to record that these antagonisms were at last successfully overcome, or will have to pronounce the verdict that they tore the cause to pieces and flung the hope of Socialism away.

Our position is at any rate less parlous than that of the religious disputants of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation. For, save on a small scale, Socialist has not physically battled with Socialist in open war. Social Democrats and Communists have indeed shot one another down in the streets of Berlin, and the disastrous outcome is seen by all. But as, except in Russia, Socialism is a creed not of States, but of oppositions, internecine contention has seldom issued in actual fighting. This has made it easier for the opposing factions, in countries where the strain has been less, to remain conscious of unity, even amid their disputations. The official leaders of the Communist Party may

have blackguarded the Labour leaders in the most unmeasured terms, and Labour leaders retaliated by seeking to expel the Communists from the organised working-class movement and by denouncing them as the disrupters of working-class unity. Despite these hostile exchanges, the main body of the Socialist and Communist following has remained conscious of underlying Socialist unity. Defence against Fascism has led in France and in Austria to "united fronts" which do somehow work. And nearly all Socialists of whatever complexion do acclaim the Soviet State as the first great national victory of Socialism, however strongly they may criticise Communist strategy or dissociate themselves from the Communist ethic of "frightfulness" towards class enemies. The Socialist sense of fellowship is more than a phrase, wherever it has not been subjected to so intense a strain as to shatter it wholly to pieces. Even when Socialist fought Socialist in the last war, finding the call of the nation stronger in practice than the call of Socialist internationalism, they remained conscious of being Socialists—conscious that Socialism had united them and would before long unite them again.

It was a poor sort of Christianity that bade men persecute, oppress and destroy one another in the name of Christ; and it is a poor sort of Socialism that sets Socialist fighting Socialist in bitterness of spirit to-day. But we have to take men as they are, and not as we should ideally wish them to be. We have to recognise that tolerance is the latest and most limited of the virtues, and that mankind has yet devised no means of resolving ultimate antagonisms save by force. Law within nations does, up to a point, restrain men from flying at one another's throats; and the habit of living together in communities under law creates a sort of tolerance. But law is too often only an overwhelming concentration of force on one side of the argument; and under any severe strain the limits of toleration are easily

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reached if those who find themselves in opposition to the law as it stands can feel any hope of success. What is tolerable in a nation at peace becomes intolerable in time of war, and toleration of liberty is commonly conditional on liberty not being used in ways which the groups in power think likely to subvert the social order. Civil war is an even more terrible breeding ground of intolerance than war between nations.

Men resort to force when they feel deeply and cannot get their way by argument or bluster. Not long ago it would have seemed plausible to say that within the boundaries of civilised States men had learned to resort to force much less readily than they used to do, and grown better satisfied with counting heads to save the trouble of breaking them. But not even so much can be affirmed to-day, with brute force resurgent as the arbiter of social differences over a large part of the world. And between State and State the rule of force has never been even suspended for a moment. It is still taken by most people as a natural thing that in the last resort States should resort to warfare if they cannot get their way by other means. In the last resort law involves sanctions ; and such sanctions as international law has possessed have been in themselves a denial of legality. But even the sanctions of national law have only a limited validity. Most political theories, save those of sheer absolutism, have justified revolution as a last resort of the governed against evil governors ; and that involves recognising the possible justification of an ultimate appeal to force.

Where this is recognised, it is also implicitly admitted that there are limits to tolerance. For if men may appeal to force at all, surely they must be entitled to appeal to it in defence of their profoundest convictions. The existence of the "reign of law" in any society implies some measure of agreement about the foundations of society ; and, where

this agreement is lacking, the limits of toleration are apt to be speedily reached. Men value their privileges or their claims more than they value the practice of adjusting matters within the law as it stands, or by consent, or by the voice of a majority ; for they disagree about the forms in which consent is to be expressed, or about the right of a majority to decide the issue, or about the authority of the existing system of law. If a change of system can be made by stages, it may be possible to make it without resort to violence ; for no single step may arouse an irreconcilable will to resist. But if the change is to be made abruptly, without easing the transition, the cross is likely to be far too wide for those who are threatened with the loss of their privileges to face it without appealing to force.

But, in respect of the fundamental questions which arouse these irreconcilable antagonisms, all Socialists are on the same side. Ideally they all believe in the same things. They differ about methods, not about aims. There may be fundamental reasons for anti-Socialists to resist dispossession. There are no such deeply seated reasons for Socialist to fight against Socialist. They may fight none the less ; but if they do, it will be in spite of their deepest ideals and beliefs, and not because of them.

There is, then, a real comradeship of Socialism, even between Socialists who are fighting one another under the banner of rival national States. And there is, for most of the ordinary members of opposing Socialist factions, a sense of comradeship in a common cause that is not quite destroyed by quarrels about policy and method, though it may be so overlaid as to be almost forgotten and quite disregarded for a time. One thing that helps to sustain this comradeship is the common economic status of the working class. For though not all Socialists are workers, most are, and the working class furnishes Socialism with its rallying point. Now, except in times of revolutionary ferment, the

working-class struggle is primarily industrial, and in the industrial field it is obvious that disunity means immediate defeat. It is fatal to trade unionism even more evidently than to Socialism to be split up into warring factions. For a strike or any act of resistance to employers can hardly succeed without the united support of those concerned. Consequently trade unionism puts up a stiff fight against dismemberment by doctrinal differences, and even where the trade union movement is split the dissident factions often act together and establish in the workshops a *de facto* solidarity which denies the completeness of their political estrangement. This instinctive solidarity can break down under excessive strain ; but it takes more to destroy it than to dissolve political unity, because trade union action deals less with politics with ideas and policies, and more with immediate facts about which there can be no two opinions.

For my part, I entirely repudiate for Great Britain the Communist strategy of preparing for "the revolution" by doing everything possible to discredit and weaken the existing leadership of the trade unions and the Labour Party. But, profoundly as I disagree with what I regard as the dangerously disruptive tactics of the British Communist leaders, I am quite unable to divest myself of the feeling that the Communist is a fellow-Socialist of mine, and therefore shares with me in a fellowship from which all non-Socialists are excluded. I think also that the Communist, though he may seldom mention my name without feeling it his duty to sling mud, has at bottom the same feeling. He may regard himself as in duty bound to describe me as a "social Fascist" or even a "social traitor" ; but he does not really believe these charges save in a purely Pickwickian sense. He regards me, and I regard him, as mistaken ; but he must know perfectly well that our differences about method coexist with a real community of aim. At all events, even if the Communist should refuse to regard me, who

am only a poor intellectual Socialist, as a man and a brother, he cannot stop, and does definitely want to stimulate, the instinctive solidarity that makes fellow-workers both feel and act together in spite of their political differences. Nor can the Labour Party or the Trades Union Congress, by putting "subversive" organisations on a black-list, stop the instinctive "united front" that forms itself where real class issues have to be faced—over the Means Test, for example. We Socialists have, one with another and with the working class as a whole, a real and deep-seated community of outlook and aspiration—a faith which is one, however differently we may interpret it in terms of immediate policy. We are the people who, all over the world, want to give the bottom dogs a fair chance, and believe that they will get this chance only when the means of production are owned and administered for the common benefit of all.

Let us try to see rather more clearly of what elements this comradeship that I have called the Socialist movement is made up. There are, first of all, the conscious Socialists—those who have made Socialism the central ideological force in their lives. These Socialists are organised. They belong to various Socialist societies or as individual members to local Labour Parties up and down the country. They are used to working together in groups for "the cause," and prepared to give up at least something for it. They believe in Socialism enough not simply to vote for it, but in some degree to work and live for it as well. Of course I do not mean that they work and live for Socialism with the whole of their lives or with all their force. They are, even apart from the necessity of working for their daily bread, many other things as well as Socialists. They have ties of family affection, friendships outside the "cause," interests and pleasures which have nothing directly to do with Socialism. Almost every Socialist's—as, indeed, almost every

individual's—life is a continuous accommodation between often conflicting claims and desires, and each person strikes this accommodation after his individual fashion. A man who is a Socialist by conviction may give more or less of his life to Socialism, just as a man who is a devout Christian, or holds any other deep belief, may give more or less of his life to the "cause" in which he chiefly believes. One man may have many "causes," and give so much of himself to one and so much to another. He may succeed in his own consciousness in fusing several "causes" into one : so that, for example, Christianity and Socialism, or Dialectical Materialism and Socialism, seem to him facets of the same universal truth. A man does not cease to be a Socialist because he fails to give Socialism all his life, or there would be very few Socialists, and those few would be all fanatical outcasts from the common living of mankind. We have all to live rounded lives if we can, satisfying in some measure the varied claims of our natures. To deny the right to do this is to make claims which fly in the face of human nature and defeat their own end.

Socialism, like most things, is a matter of degree. But there comes a point at which the quantitative difference turns qualitative. The real test of a man's Socialism lies in his feeling rather than in his purely intellectual conviction. He is a Socialist if, in his inner consciousness, he so identifies himself with Socialism that it is inconceivable for him ever on any provocation to take sides in his heart against Socialism, or to ally himself with capitalist interests against the working class. By this test MacDonald and Snowden and their fellow "National Labourites" failed in 1931. Doubtless the Labour Party and the Labour Government were at that time in a terrible muddle, and incapable of facing the financial crisis in a tolerably competent way. Nevertheless instinctive solidarity and deep-seated Socialist feeling kept all real Socialists from considering even for a

moment whether to side with MacDonald and become the allies of capitalism in engineering a working-class defeat. For real Socialists the choice simply did not exist. The Socialist knew that the workers were his comrades : he knew that he was on their side, and that was that, however much of a muddle their leaders were making of his affairs.

To some people, I know, even to some who call themselves Socialists, this attitude appears wrong and irrational. But it is neither. The rightness of a cause transcends the immediate rightness or wrongness of its upholders in a particular and evanescent situation. If the cause is being mishandled, that is a reason not for deserting it but for sticking to it and trying to set matters straight. That is, of course, if the cause is one in which you believe, not merely as a sound business proposition, but with a deeply felt conviction of its human rightness. In 1931 the vast majority of British Socialists had enough of that conviction not to hesitate for a moment about the side they were on, even in face of the desertion of their best-known leaders. These leaders clearly lacked faith, or they would have been incapable of desertion to the enemy : most of us, bewildered and dispirited as we were at their defection, nevertheless stuck solidly together.

These Socialists by conviction, of whom I am speaking, are by a large majority of the working class ; for the working class is the most numerous, and it is easier for a workman to become a Socialist than for those who have to be prepared to put away their privileges when the call comes. There is, however, no class monopoly of Socialist faith, which, like all faith, is a matter of individual attitude and conviction. A man cannot put off class by becoming a Socialist. For class is a matter of nurture and culture ; and, where classes exist at all, men cannot unclass themselves at will. What a man does in becoming a Socialist is to deny the claims of class superiority, and to put himself on a footing of social equality in the movement with everybody in

it, from whatever classes they come. He cannot, by doing this, prevent the fact of class from getting sometimes in the way of easy comradeship, for to some extent class habits are bound to clash. People who are used to different sorts of meal at different hours of the day, have different ways of amusing themselves, different forms of speech and thought, and different scales of values in the arts and amenities of life, are bound to feel awkward at times when they mingle together for the "cause"—especially when their mingling is not for business but is designed to be purely "social." Nevertheless, in the Socialist movement Socialists of different class origins do successfully achieve comradeship ; and success in achieving it is usually an excellent test of a man's Socialism where the class from which he comes is one whose prejudices he is called upon to fight.

Among the manual workers, Socialism comes easiest to the organised and the skilled. The unorganised have usually not learnt in narrower groups of trade or occupation the first lessons in solidarity. The unskilled and ill-paid have usually too hard a grind to develop forms of faith which call for intellectual effort as well as emotional response. The skilled workers have always provided the proletariat with its industrial leadership ; for some of them have always been able to transmute the narrower consciousness of craft into faith in a wider solidarity. There are unskilled and unorganised workers who are conscious Socialists ; but they are exceptional. Revolt comes mainly not from the bottom dogs who suffer the greatest exploitation, but from those workers whom a sense of limited power has lifted above mere acquiescence in their lot.

There is indeed in these days another sort of working-class Socialist, who is often attracted, at least in the first instance, to the Communist Party. This is the proletarian *déclassé*—the worker who has fallen out of the ranks of the wage-earners into chronic unemployment. Idleness, and

the sense of being unwanted in the world, stir his resentment, and often make him an embittered rebel against things as they are. Conscious of ill-usage even in comparison with his fellow-workers, he is often suspicious even of his friends, and very ready to regard everyone save his companions in misfortune as a "twister," intent on self-aggrandisement and ready to "betray" the cause. On these qualities, the product of his misfortunes, the Communist Party has been prompt to play, and from this section of the workers they have secured in Great Britain a substantial part of their following. Some few of these unfortunates are of the salt of the earth ; but for the most part conviction based principally on resentment is unstable and unenduring. The unemployed man gets a job, sticks to it, and soon changes his tune ; or, if he remains unemployed, he is very likely to sink into apathy and lose interest in all the politicians and agitators who promise him so much but are powerless to give him the immediate help he needs. Save for a few, the chronically unemployed, except in the areas in which the trade union tradition is particularly strong, make unreliable Socialists. No effective movement can be built upon them without the stiffening support of the employed workers.

That makes it the more regrettable that in the depressed areas the employed and the unemployed should often have been allowed to drift so far apart. Many trade unions have failed to enrol the unemployed or even to hold their employed members in the ranks ; and the movement as a whole has been remiss about taking the lead in organising them and backing up their claims with due appreciation of their natural impatience. It is by no means enough to promise a workless man redress when Socialism comes into its own, or even when a Labour Government is returned to power. He wants redress now, or if not redress at any rate the opportunity for vigorous protest.

The second active element among the Socialists consists of the "intellectuals," drawn mainly from the professional classes. Quite naturally this element plays a large part in Socialist propaganda and exerts an influence out of proportion to its numbers. It is highly articulate in both speech and writing, highly trained and educated, and far more rationalistic in its interpretation of Socialism than any other section of the movement. It has a great deal to say for itself; and it keeps on saying and writing with a facility that leaves less articulate but not less sincere Socialists gasping for breath. From the beginning this section has made theories and policies for the movement, or at least has formulated them and written them down. Naturally so, for formulation and articulate expression are its job, its specific contribution to Socialism while Socialism remains at the stage of opposition. From Marx and Lassalle to Webb and Lenin, the "intellectuals" have made creeds and systems into which the Socialist faith has been compressed. A class or a movement cannot rationalise or formulate systems : that is the work of individuals as the articulate interpreters of collective hopes and desires. But the "intellectuals" do not theorise in the void. They are even more interpreters than creators. They formulate what men and women less articulate than themselves are feeling and wanting, and they achieve influence only to the extent to which they are able readily to interpret and express other people's wants.

It is often charged against the "intellectuals" that they dominate the Socialist movement too much ; and every now and then some outstanding trade union leader takes occasion to remind them that the workers pay the piper and have accordingly the right to call the tune. These reminders are all to the good as long as the trade union leader does not pass into an attitude of suspicious antagonism to the "intellectuals." Someone has to formulate the

Socialist creed, and to be continually formulating it afresh in the light of changing conditions. The "intellectuals" have no monopoly of this task ; but it is natural for them to play a large part in it, and by virtue of their training to be able to do it in a fairly competent way. It would be bad for Socialism if they ceased to do it, even though it is sometimes necessary for the trade union leader to give them a salutary reminder that the main brunt of the struggle is bound to fall upon the workers, and that it is vain to formulate theories which show no adequate appreciation of "what the workers want," or of what they can and cannot achieve.

There is, however, one real sense in which the "intellectuals" do play in the Socialist movement a part which is disproportionate to their power to serve. They have more freedom than the proletarians—more freedom to go about attending conferences, to sit on committees or on Borough or County Councils, to stand for Parliament and to express their Socialist views without danger of being positively starved into submission to the powers that be. The Socialist intellectual, when he gets the chance, chooses a career that gives him this sort of freedom, often preferring a lower income with more freedom to more money and higher professional status at the cost of a diminishing ability to speak his mind. This freedom to go about and to spend time in the service of the movement does considerably increase the influence of the intellectuals, and even sometimes gives them the appearance without the reality of "running the show." They sit on committees about all manner of things, usually trying hard, but often in vain, to discover working-class representatives who are prepared to sit with them. They get elected on to things, because they can manage to do the work, whereas other people cannot. But in fact their power is everywhere conditioned by the degree of working-class confidence that they really command. They are constantly conscious of this condition and to some extent

inhibited by it. They try to interpret the desires of the movement as a whole, and often have a great deal of difficulty in finding out what the movement wants. The Socialist "intellectuals" are very far from "running" the movement, for all their theorising. They follow it, and in the last resort the feelings and instinctive loyalties of the workers determine the course of events.

The Socialist workers are the flower of their class ; for almost every worker who is above the average level of his class's attainment is a Socialist. But the Socialist "intellectuals" are not the flower of the intelligentsia, but in the matter of intelligence only a fair sample. The Socialist intellectual is not necessarily more intelligent than the Conservative or Liberal intellectual, or than the intellectual whose interests lie quite outside the political field. The intellectual becomes a Socialist not because he is cleverer than the rest, but because he has either a more insistent social conscience or a sense of being thwarted by the impact of things as they are ; and all too often a youthful velleity towards Socialism fades away as he becomes immersed in "affairs" as a business or a professional man, or simply settles down to the routine ways of living that are most in harmony with his social environment. Among the intellectuals, Socialism makes far more converts in youth than it is able to hold in middle age. It always will, until businesses and professions are conducted on Socialist lines, and the social environment in which the intellectual settles down to middle age has become a Socialist environment.

The workers, and not the intellectuals, provide the main body of Socialist apostles. But even among the organised workers the convinced Socialists are only a small fraction of the whole. Most intelligent manual workers are Socialists as far as they have definite political opinions. But the majority of them are still trade unionists a good deal more definitely than they are Socialists. This is natural enough ;

for the trade union is far more closely linked with their pressing and immediate problems of every-day living than Socialism can be in any society in which it remains only an aspiration and not a social order actually in being. The trade union attends to immediate bread and butter questions, and at the same time confers on its members a sense of comradeship and collective self-help in face of the monster machine of modern business. It helps to give the organised workers confidence and a sense of unity which, in face of class divisions and economic inequalities, they cannot find either in the factory where they work or in the town in which they live. It means for the organised worker at least some defence against exploitation and some force greater than his own which he can count on as being definitely on his side.

This sense of trade union solidarity has in the past usually been strongest where it has been most narrow. There has been a closer bond between skilled workers following the same craft than where a trade union has grouped together a number of different occupations. Solidarity is stronger within a single union than between one union and another. The growing scale of capitalist organisation has doubtless done something to broaden the basis of trade union solidarity. Miners and railwaymen have both built up trade unions in which the sense of comradeship rests on a foundation of industry rather than craft, and the General Strike of 1926 showed a spirit of unity extending through almost the whole of the organised working class and reaching a good many of the unorganised workers as well.

On the other hand, the development of industrial mechanisation and the prevalence of unemployment have in recent years done a good deal to weaken the hold of the old-established trade unions in which the sense of loyalty and solidarity has hitherto been strongest. As craft demarcations

have been broken down, and as "semi-skill" has replaced full craftsmanship over a wider and wider field, the hold of trade unionism on a considerable section of the working class has necessarily grown less intense, not only because of trade union failure, so far, effectively to organise the newer industries, but also because, even where they do become organised, the sense of solidarity among the workers in them is apt to be less keen. The new semi-skilled occupations are not necessarily life-long occupations to anything like the same extent as the older skilled crafts. The industrial mobility of labour increases, and therewith the old loyalites lose something of their power.

It is not possible for trade unionism wholly to counteract these tendencies by adapting its methods of work and organisation. Something the unions can do by devising new forms of collective bargaining appropriate to the new conditions of large-scale mechanised production. But if they are to stand up successfully to the new conditions they will have to unite workers over a far wider field as the effective range of mobility and competition between worker and worker grows greater; and in doing this they will necessarily lose some part of the appeal which arose from the very narrowness of the bond of union between workmen following for the whole of their lives a single highly skilled craft. This necessary widening of trade unionism carries with it an increasing tendency for the trade union to become a political as well as an industrial instrument. For it becomes clearer and clearer than industrial grievances cannot be put right without recourse to political remedies, and that under the changed conditions the power of the trade unions to improve their members' standard of living depends to an ever-increasing extent on their ability to bring about changes in the economic structure as a whole. In these circumstances the keen trade unionist of the younger generation becomes somewhat less

a trade unionist, but at the same time more of a Socialist. Or rather, he comes to regard his trade union to an increasing extent as an instrument for the furtherance of Socialism, and not merely for collective bargaining within the field of his own industry or occupation.

This change in the economic foundations of the working-class movement should make, on the whole, for a strengthening of the Socialist appeal. It tends to unify the working class in opposition to a capitalist system less split up into different groups and sections, and more clearly standing, as a single and restrictive force, in the way of common working-class aspirations. Moreover, the assimilation of craftsmen to labourers and of labourers to craftsmen is accompanied by a parallel process of assimilation of "black-coats" to manual workers and of manual workers to "black-coats." All these sections become increasingly conscious that their hopes of security and of the enjoyment of continuous incomes and of a rising standard of life depend not mainly on the particular firms which employ them, or on the body of employers in the particular industry or service in which they are engaged, but on what becomes of the economic system as a whole—on the success or failure of society as a whole in mastering the forces making for mass-unemployment and for internationally competitive depreciation of the standards of living.

These considerations drive men towards political as well as merely industrial solidarity. They have created the Labour Party as no mere federation of trade unions for political purposes, but as an inclusive working-class party based in spirit more on local constituency organisation than on that naturally affiliated trade union membership in which the last word in finance and voting strength at the party conference still resides. The Labour Party is still only in process of growing, through its local organisations, a Socialist consciousness to complement its earlier trade union

solidarity ; but the new spirit has been developing rapidly inside it in recent years.

There are some Socialists who appear to regret this growth because it is likely to make the Labour Party in the future less formally and exclusively a "proletarian" party. The local Labour Parties, unlike the trade unions, are open to all, irrespective of class origins or nature of employments. This has, among other consequences, the enormous advantage of establishing real sex-equality within the movement ; for the working-class housewife, as well as the woman worker in industry, can now take part in it on equal terms. But, even apart from this, it is to the good ; for it gives those who are not, and often cannot be, trade unionists in any real sense, but can be, and often are, just as good Socialists as the general run of trade union members, a chance of helping to create on terms of equality a solid front of the real workers by hand and brain against those whose primary conception of their interests is based on the maintenance of property rights and exclusive class privilege.

The new conditions, then, hold out the hope of a wider solidarity for Socialism than a movement based more exclusively on trade unionism could possibly hope to achieve. But we have to take also the consequences of the way in which this wider solidarity is being brought to birth. Trade unionism, as an industrial movement of protest, suppressed or boycotted by the ruling and employing classes as long as they could, and with the strike as its characteristic method of enforcing its claims, always had about it an air of outlawry and a feeling of potential militancy. Even in spite of itself, it had often to wage the class war. But a political movement, with the ballot-box instead of the strike as its means of expression, has no such instinctive militancy. It tends to moderation and respectability, as long as it can hope to win concessions by moderate and respectable means. Moreover, its struggle is far less clear-cut, and its

following far less precisely defined. Therefore, although the new situation furthers the growth of Socialist feeling, it also tends to create this feeling, at least for the present, in mild and unmilitant forms. Only when the political battle is really joined—that is, when even a mild policy of Socialism has brought the Labour Party up against a capitalist will to offer really fierce resistance in preference to compromising or giving way—will the mild Socialism of the general mass of the Labour electorate stand a chance of being converted into a real and formidable will to tear up capitalism by the roots, and make the great adventure into a new way of life.

## CHAPTER XI

### MARXISM AND THE UTOPIANS

THERE IS AN OLD conflict in Socialism between the "moralists" and the "class-warriors." The Utopian Socialist hoped to regenerate society by appealing to men's better feelings, through the spread of "enlightenment," and by persuading the rich as well as the poor that they would be really happier in a classless society of economic equals. Scientific Socialists, of whom Karl Marx is prophet, scoffed at the Utopians and offered, by way of refuting them, an interpretation of human history in terms of power and conflict. Never in history, say the Marxists, has any ruling class transcended its class egoism, or made to morality or humanity a single concession that it did not believe to be reconcilable with the retention of its class power. Justice among men will come, they tell us, not when men in the mass are prepared to act more justly, but only when the material forces on the side of justice grow stronger than the forces ranged against it. The working class will overthrow its tyrants ; but the victory will be won by superior force and not by the abdication of its oppressors, though it is not denied that individuals here and there may desert from the one side to the other. The call of the Marxists is to a class war waged for the victory of justice but with the weapons of sheer material force.

Nevertheless, the Marxist must believe his cause to be just before he can set to work lustily to win over the material forces to his side. He does not want simply to win, but to secure the victory of what he believes to be right. The moral

imperative is not abolished by the belief that its urgency is not enough to command success. The Marxist must paint pictures of the injustice and immorality of capitalism, and must himself believe that capitalism is immoral and unjust before it can afford him any satisfaction to feel assured that the big battalions are on his side. It would not be *his* side unless he believed his cause to be right as well as formidable.

The real dispute between the Marxist and the Utopian is a dispute about human nature. The Utopian wants to believe, and succeeds in believing, that men are decent enough or rational enough to set about establishing a new order of society because they believe it to be right or sensible. The Utopian is himself a person accustomed to abstract thought, and able to distinguish between the motives on which he is prepared to act together with others, and those by which, as matters actually stand, he is compelled largely to guide his individual conduct. He is not necessarily an ascetic or a philanthropist in his private affairs ; but he is prepared as a citizen to recognise the claims of other citizens as no less valid than his own, and to put himself in their place—in the place of all—when he is arriving at a political judgment. He may be a “ saint ” as well as a Utopian, and act on the principle of equal claims in his private life as well as in public affairs. But he need not be this, and many men are prepared to act on the principle of equality when they are acting as citizens without being at the same time ready to sell all they have and give it to the poor. Nor is this at all illogical. There is a perfectly valid distinction between being ready to co-operate in doing something and being ready to do it all alone at whatever sacrifice, simply because it could produce certain good results which are conditional on other people doing it too.

The Utopian, then, is not necessarily a personal altruist. But he is a believer in the possibility of persuading men in the mass to act on moral, or far-seeing rational, motives.

He looks forward to Socialism as due to come through men's collective realisation of its rightness, and collective willingness to act on their belief. He appeals to the sense of benevolence and justice and rationality in every individual, and not solely to the massed power of the social forces he can hope to win over to his side. He need not, indeed, ignore the existence of these forces. But he appeals for their support on moral or rational grounds as the collective representatives of the individuals who make them up. Clearly no group as such can be appealed to on moral or rational grounds. Morality and rationality are essentially attributes of individuals and not of groups or classes or States or any other collective bodies. Therefore, in appealing to the group or class, the Utopian appeals to it through the individuals of whom it is composed.

To the Marxists reliance on this appeal seems mere sentimentality. For in their view groups and classes, and not individuals, are the driving forces of social change. Morality and rationality remain from the social point of view mere wind unless there is force behind them. The problem for Socialists, as they see it, is to get the preponderance of social forces on the side of Socialism.

The Utopian, as a moralist, would have us struggle for Socialism not merely because it will benefit the oppressed, but because it is right, and rightness in itself is enough. The Marxist, on the other hand, believes that the pressure of material conditions will cause the mass to turn to Socialism as a way out of its misery, but believes also that the coherence and intensity of its struggle can be helped on by the conviction that right as well as might is on its side: The Marxist knows, too, that most men fight better in the confidence of victory than in the expectation of defeat, or at any rate that they can be more easily induced to fight when they think they are going to win. He therefore compounds a gospel out of the iniquities of capitalism and the historical

necessity of the workers' triumph. The workers will fight finally because the struggle is to their advantage, but they will fight all the better for believing that their cause is just and that the victory is certain to be theirs.

I do not mean that the Marxist compounds this somewhat cynical mixture with conscious hypocrisy. He believes in it : it is his own creed. The point is that he neither follows the Utopian in placing exclusive reliance on the rightness and rationality of his cause nor discards rightness and rationality altogether in favour of material force or historical necessity, but blends all these into a gospel that offers the oppressed at least three causes of comfort and assurance. It is satisfying to feel right and rational : it is satisfying to feel strong ; and it is satisfying to feel predestined to victory. The Marxist offers all three. The proletariat is right because it stands against class oppression and the filching of "surplus value" by the possessing classes. The proletariat is strong because numbers are on its side and capitalism itself has to make it strong because only out of its labour can "value" proceed. The proletariat is predestined to succeed to the inheritance of capitalism because all human history is a record of the emergence of oppressed classes to power and, after the victory of capitalism over feudalism, only the proletariat remains enslaved.

This doctrine may be believed because it is comforting ; but it fails to comfort unless it is believed. It is comforting to many people to believe in the proletariat's inevitable victory ; but they would hardly be able to believe in it unless they could see power on the proletarian side. Men cannot believe things *merely* because they want to believe them. For human belief seeks objectification in real things. It becomes easier to believe in the victory of the proletariat when you have actually won a strike, when you have a big trade union behind you, when the proletariat has ceased to be merely an idea and has taken on a physical and

material shape in action. Faith reinforces power, but power realised in action helps greatly to create faith. That perhaps is why priests have commonly laid so much stress on miracles.

When Marx wrote, the proletariat was not yet strong enough to wrest victory from the hands of the capitalist class. Capitalism was then still a developing system advancing to fresh material conquests. Marx was the prophet of a proletarian triumph to be realised at some time in the not distant future—but still in the future and not the present. He foresaw correctly the difficulties lying ahead of capitalism, its passage from an expansive into a restrictive phase, its liability to crises of increasing severity. As against this he saw the proletariat steadily waxing in power up to the point at which it could become strong enough to wrest authority from the degenerating capitalist system and reconstruct society in the image of its own desires.

This view implied that, as capitalism grew weaker, the proletariat would continue to grow stronger. Marx held, of course, that the proletariat would suffer increasing oppression as the difficulties of capitalism grew greater. This was his “theory of increasing misery.” But he held that this growing oppression would increase the power of the proletariat and steadily reinforce the manual workers with new recruits driven down into their ranks from the classes above them, as the control of massed capital became concentrated in fewer and fewer hands.

This view either ignored or discounted two very important points. It left out of account the fact that highly concentrated control of capital is fully compatible with wide diffusion of its ownership and that the middle classes, so far from being crushed out, would, for a long time to come, positively increase in both numbers and wealth. It ignored, in fact, the difference between the old *petite bourgeoisie* of master-craftsmen, small traders and well-to-do

peasants and the new *petite bourgeoisie* of salaried non-manual employees and skilled professional workers which was growing more and more important as capitalism grew richer. Secondly, it laid no stress on the fact that the lowering of the value of labour-power by increasing mechanisation would inevitably weaken the trade unions as instruments of working-class defence.

To this second point Marx would doubtless have replied that if the trade unions grew weaker and less able to protect their members, the workers would be driven over to a more revolutionary attitude and would become more Socialist as the prospects of successful craft defence within the capitalist system grew less. Up to a point this is true, though the process of conversion has been exceedingly slow in face of the uneven impact of economic forces on different grades and sections of the working class. On the first point, however, Marx was, it appears, definitely over-optimistic from the standpoint of his own hopes. Even in the present capitalist depression, the middle classes are by no means being crushed out, though in certain countries, where inflation has struck away the foundations from fixed incomes derived from property, certain sections of the middle classes have been decisively ruined. Even where this has happened, the tendency among the ruined members of the middle classes has been, not to accept the loss of their privileges and come over to the Socialist side, but rather to rally to the side of capitalism in an attempt to retrieve their fortunes on a basis of continuing privilege. In both Germany and Italy the *déclassés* have been the thugs of capitalism, not the hoped-for reinforcements for the proletarian armies.

It can doubtless be argued that this is no more than a passing phase and that Fascism, fatally unable to resolve the underlying contradictions of capitalism, is destined before long to break down or to give place to a naked capitalist dictatorship which will provoke a desertion of the

middle class to the Socialist cause. Fascism, say some Socialists, must be given time to demonstrate its failure ; and Socialism will inevitably enter on its inheritance as soon as this failure has become clear. I am not prepared to assert dogmatically that this view is wrong. But neither am I prepared willingly to pass through the horrors of a Fascist dictatorship in order to give it a chance of proving its futility, if there is any hope of advancing to Socialism by a less dismally uncomfortable road. I should not, however, believe that there was any other hope if I did think that all moral and rational considerations had to be left out of account, save as means of heightening the workers' determination in estimating the prospects of a Socialist victory. The belief that there is an alternative to the snatching of Socialism out of the decay of Fascism, after Fascism has been allowed a full lease of power, does involve reliance on an appeal to something more than a purely mechanistic version of the Materialist Conception of History. It involves, not against the Materialist Conception of History but in complementation of it, belief in an appeal to ethical and rationalistic motives as well as to sheer force.

The proletariat by itself is not strong enough to wrest the control of society from the capitalist class except by waiting for the sheer dissolution of the capitalist order ; and even then it can be powerful enough only if, at the right moment, there is forthcoming a leadership well enough knit and confident enough to snatch victory out of chaos. The weakening of the trade unions implies this lack of power, for it is a symptom of the declining power of the organised manual workers within the capitalist machine. If Socialism is to come by any less disastrous road, the proletariat must succeed in winning powerful reinforcements over to its side, not because they are sheerly driven down into its ranks, but because they have come to believe in the rightness and expediency of the cause for which it stands. They can come

to believe this either from ethical or from rationalistic motives, or, as far more often happens, from a blend of both. The main force present in their minds may be either a desire for fair dealing between men or a disgust at the confusions and wastes involved in the continuance of capitalism. Either of these motives, or both, can make them recruits to Socialism, not because they have no alternative, but because they have come to want Socialism as the only right and sensible solution of the social problem.

If this is so, it becomes immensely important to devise the best means of winning over to the Socialist side a substantial number of the intermediate classes in capitalist society. How is this to be done? It will assuredly not be done by mere "moderation," by watering down the Socialist gospel in order to adjust it to the supposed limitations of the middle-class mind. For any such watering down of Socialism fatally destroys the Socialist appeal. Half-Socialism—a mere infusion of certain socialistic measures into a predominantly capitalist society—promises not to end but to increase social confusions, by placing an additional strain upon a capitalist machine which is already strained almost to breaking point. Socialists can indeed offer the prospect of an evolutionary rather than of an abrupt transition from capitalism towards Socialism; but they cannot afford to give up one iota of the complete Socialist gospel without forfeiting their claim to offer a solution of the social problem.

The best way of winning over a substantial section of the intermediate classes to Socialism is not by being "moderate" but by being sensible. More than anything else, what holds back many potential middle-class supporters from becoming Socialists is the fear of Socialist incompetence—the fear that Socialist Governments will bungle the transition to Socialism, and despite their excellent intentions leave society in still worse a mess than they found it. The

history of past Labour Governments in Great Britain lends a good deal of countenance to this view ; but clearly the defect of these Governments was not that they plunged too adventurously into Socialist construction, but rather that they seemed altogether too fearful of plunging at all. They did not look competent, or as if they believed themselves to be competent. There were exceptions in individual Ministries, but this was unquestionably the general impression which they conveyed. I do not suggest that the Labour Governments were in fact more incompetent than the Governments which preceded and succeeded them. A Government does not ordinarily need to be particularly competent if its purpose is merely that of maintaining the *status quo*, whereas a Government which sets out to change the foundations of the social order requires competence and personal initiative in a far higher degree. It is not enough for Socialist Governments to be as competent as their political opponents ; they need to be far more competent if they are to appear at all equal to their far more difficult task.

I suggest, then, that the winning over of a sufficient section of intermediate-class supporters to the side of Socialism is now above all else a matter of competent Socialist leadership and competent planning for the transition to Socialism. Both the ethical and the rationalistic motives which are required to induce a substantial section of middle-class people to come over to Socialism are present already. More and more people outside the ranks of the workers do accept the essential justice of the Socialist case. More and more of these sorts of people do, moreover, recognise that capitalism involves a prodigious and indefensible waste of valuable social resources and is becoming, in its latter-day phrases, more and more disposed to damp down the increasing powers of production rather than to make use of them for increasing the sum of human happiness

and welfare. Both moral and rational men are more inclined to-day to be Socialists than they ever were before, and this applies not only to the workers but to a rapidly increasing group among the technicians in industry and the professional classes, and to other sections of the middle classes while they are still young enough not to have been swallowed up by a social environment of snobbery and class privilege. What is lacking is neither the ethical nor the rationalistic drive towards Socialist equality, but the belief that the Socialist movement is equipped to translate its aspirations into definite social facts. If we Socialists can but get for ourselves a leadership that is able to inspire this confidence, and get behind that leadership a policy and a programme which promise an orderly as well as a rapid advance towards a Socialist system, I believe we shall be able not only to impel the proletariat far more decisively than it is being impelled to-day towards a conscious striving after Socialism, but also to bring over to our side enough of the experts and the professionals and the mere rank and file of the intermediate classes to bring victory easily within our grasp.

## CHAPTER XII

### SOCIALISM AND THE CLASS SYSTEM

THE OUTSTANDING SOCIAL PRODUCT of capitalism is the *bourgeoisie*, or, to give a very English product an English name, the middle classes. The middle classes made modern capitalism, fighting for the freedom to make it successfully against the oppressions and disorders of feudalism ; and in the process of making it these classes increased and multiplied to a truly remarkable extent. The growing bands of merchants and industrial capitalists helped to bring into being a host of other persons of middle rank—lawyers to argue their commercial cases and attend to their property, doctors to minister to their health, school-masters to instruct their children, and before long a host of subordinate managers to attend to their growing businesses, and of public officials to deal with the increasing complexities of government. There was a time when the upper positions under the State and in the professions and the more eligible preferments in the Church were within the circle of aristocratic monopoly, whereas other professionals and the lower grades of the priesthood ranked quite low in the social scale. But the rising middle classes of commerce and industry, in capturing so much besides, captured the professions, and raised greatly the status and incomes of the ordinary run of professional men. The social distance between barrister and mere attorney grew less ; doctors and the higher grades of schoolmasters began to be ranked as

"gentlemen" and recruited more largely from a restricted social class. In the wake of the industrial employers, who had been regarded at first as an "uncouth" sort of persons, but graduated rapidly through riches to a sort of gentility, the managers of factories and better-off shopkeepers also began to set up claims to belong to the gentlemanly classes. The suburb, as it flourished in the Victorian era in partnership with the superior kind of school, manufactured ladies and gentlemen at a prodigious and ever-increasing pace.

Socially the claims of these new "gentlefolk" were recognised but grudgingly by the older gentry. "Society" would have nothing to do with them in the mass, though it accepted individuals out of their number when they were able to conform to its standards, and was ready enough to marry rising wealth in order to buttress up its material fortunes. Between "society" and the main body of the middle classes the gulf is not yet fully bridged, though aristocracy has turned in fact mainly into plutocracy with a veneer. But stratification in complex forms has replaced the old simple contrast between "gentlefolk" and "common" people. There are countless overlapping circles of social superiority and inferiority ; and their range extends right into the manual-working class.

Modern capitalist society has become much less aristocratic than it used to be in capitalism's earlier days. But it has not thrust off snobbery : it has vulgarised it instead. It tickles the tallow-chandler's wife to be called "Lady" Something or Other, and Sir What-you-may-call-'em, her husband, preens himself on his knighthood. Even trade union officials stoop to receive the accolade, as if they were merchants of wage-advantages in the same sense as a grocer sells cheese. The Englishman and the Englishwoman still "love a lord," except where they are moved to invert snobbery by hating him instead. Even a purchased title

still counts in public estimation as a "title of honour."

Titles, however, are not the main part of the story. In a suburb of a certain town an estate owned by a private housing company adjoins a Corporation Housing Estate designed for tenants paying a lower rent. Certain roads, unhappily not public highways, run through both estates. The housing company has built high brick walls right across these roads in order to prevent Corporation tenants from desecrating the genteel streets of their superior neighbours—and has thus compelled the poor to make a long and troublesome detour in order to reach the buses, in which, it is to be feared, they still venture to rub shoulders with their betters. This is an extreme case; but it is significant. In how many housing estates is the "superior" social status of the tenants loudly insisted upon by the builders? How much care is taken in planning our new towns to achieve a proper segregation of the poor and the comparatively well-to-do? How many private schools still make money for their proprietors by insisting on the remarkable selectness of their clientele? And how many schoolchildren are still painfully reminded by their playmates of the desirability of concealing the fact that father is "in trade"?

It is less ungentlemanly to be "wholesale" than "retail," and it is still most gentlemanly to do nothing at all for one's living, provided one can live well as a man of property on the proceeds of other men's labour. It is less ungentlemanly to be a bank clerk than a shop assistant, a "secretary" than a "typist," a clergyman of the Establishment than a Nonconformist minister, a "schoolmaster" than a mere "teacher," a "teacher" than a shopgirl, or a "lady help" than a domestic servant. It is socially better to keep a hotel than a boarding house, a boarding house than a lodging house, and even a lodging house than merely "beds." Persons who earn their livings by manual labour

are not allowed to compete in amateur regattas ; and it is still an honour to marry " above your station " and a dishonour to marry " beneath you." An apprenticed craftsman has often a supreme contempt for a mere " labourer " ; and working-class leaders have always to overcome serious temptations if they are to avoid taking on the colour of the *bourgeoisie*, among whom they live when they have risen out of the ranks.

Present-day society in Great Britain is elaborately divided into social groups and classes. But the lines of demarcation between one group and its neighbours are seldom clear. It is impossible to draw up, for the people of Great Britain, any comprehensive table of social or economic precedence, running straight down from the top to the bottom of the social scale. There are at least seven separate but intermingling hierarchies which have to be somehow fitted together in order to get a comprehensive view of the British class system as a whole. But they cannot be fitted together in any clear or logical way ; for British society is not clearly or logically stratified. Some writers have argued on this ground that " classes " do not really exist at all. But a class can exist and be a very powerful social force without having clearly defined edges. It is so with classes in Great Britain and in all advanced capitalist countries, though for historical as well as economic reasons in no two countries are class divisions precisely the same. They are not, for example, quite the same in Scotland as in England, or even in the north of England as in the south. This lack of rigidity, however, so far from meaning that classes do not exist, is positively the British class system's greatest source of strength against democratic attack.

Let us see what we can make of an attempt to follow up the seven clues of which I have just spoken. The first clue is that of hereditary aristocracy. The second is that of ownership or occupation of land. The third is that of business

enterprise, covering all those whom the economists describe as *entrepreneurs*. The fourth is that of salaried employment. The fifth is that of professional service. The sixth is that of wage-earning. The seventh and last is based upon the ownership of property. Obviously the groupings to which these clues will guide us overlap. A professional man may draw a salary, and own property as well. An agricultural labourer gets a wage ; and a hereditary aristocrat usually owns land and other property, and may be a farmer as well. A business *entrepreneur* may draw part of his income as a salary and another part from property which he owns outside his business ; and so on. Many individuals have actually several separate class affiliations which may on occasion pull them different ways. But, if they are pulled, this shows that there is something to pull them. We shall try later on to discover whether, even if some men are doubtful of the class to which they belong, it is possible in most cases to determine a man's class affiliations with a sufficient degree of accuracy for practical purposes.

Let us begin with the hereditary aristocracy. This consists first of the royal family and of all grades of the titled nobility down to baronets. It includes all the members of the House of Lords except the Bishops and Law Lords, where the Law Lord is not also the possessor of a regular peerage. The peer or baronet may of course be of quite recent creation. He may have bought his peerage by service to his party, and this service may even consist in buying his peerage. He may even be that curious anomaly, a "Labour Lord." Whatever his origin, or his wife's, possession of a hereditary title enrols him and his in the ranks of the hereditary aristocracy. But as we shall see, the hereditary aristocrats are by no means all titled people. They include numerous unennobled gentlemen and ladies, sometimes offshoots of noble houses, but sometimes just country squires who have held their land long enough to have been

incorporated into the aristocratic tradition. They need not nowadays even hold land. Other forms of property will serve if the owners can show a close enough relationship to some unquestionably aristocratic house. Within this hereditary aristocracy there are of course many internal divisions. The really old families maintain a scorn for the ennobled *parvenus*, at any rate until time enough has passed for origins to be mercifully overlooked. The poorer aristocrats are especially apt to console themselves with blue blood in default of riches. The poor relations of the aristocracy can be heard talking about their families all over the more select, but not too expensive, hotels of spas and watering-places at home and abroad. Poor relations are a universal concomitant of hereditary aristocracy : they are with them always. Social prestige without capacity or riches is one of the most futile and distressing spectacles offered to the observer of human manners.

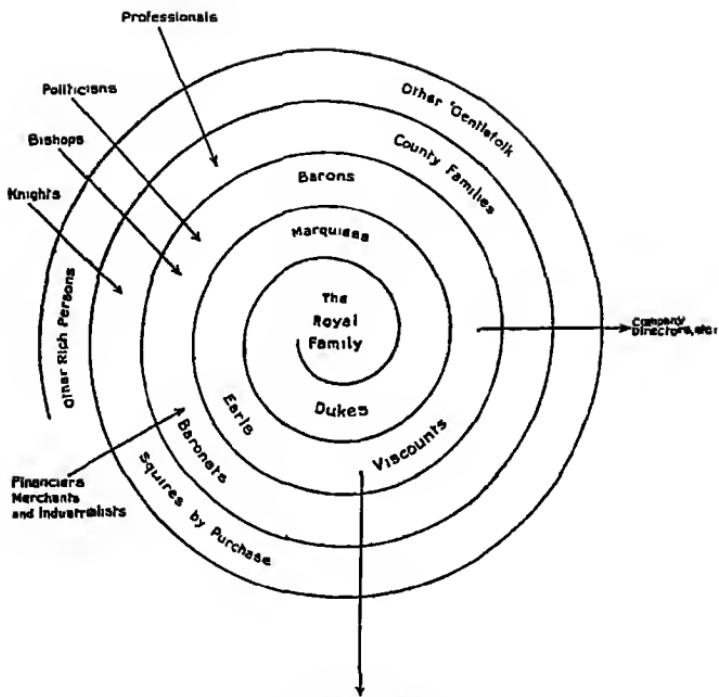
Inevitably the frontiers of hereditary aristocracy are undefined. Poor aristocrats of capacity often cast off their class and set out as *déclassés* to seek their fortunes or do the work they like doing, whether it is regarded as "suitable" or not. There is an easy descent from the "squire" to the "gentleman farmer," and thence in a generation or two to farmer pure and simple. Aristocracy is not in the habit of pursuing its poor relations when they do not pursue it : so that the hereditary aristocracy constantly leaks at one end, while it is taking in new blood at the other. People marry out of it as well as into it ; and now that it is no longer marked off from other classes by any largely exclusive monopoly of wealth or education, exits as well as entrances are more and more easily made. Yet hereditary aristocracy persists amazingly in face of the rise of plutocracy. It has lost its purity ; but it is still there, and to be an aristocrat is still, in a good many callings, a great help up the ladder of success, though not as a rule nowadays a quite

sufficient qualification by itself. Other things being equal, aristocrats are still preferred; but nowadays they need either money or brains, or at least good looks, as well as blood.

Let us make, then, our first picture of England in terms of aristocracy, which is understood as including the ennobled plutocrats as well as the traditional aristocrats of blood. We can, if we will, represent them by a figure, with the monarchy and its blood relations at the centre and all others of aristocratic profession spread round the royal family at varying distances (see opposite).

At the centre of this hierarchy is the royal family, though of late it has tended to stand more outside society and to seek rather to identify itself with the "great heart of the people." In spite of this new attitude, Court functions remain the quintessential expressions of the aristocratic spirit, and round the Crown as a symbol, if not round the King and Queen as individuals, the aristocratic solar system continues to revolve. That all this surviving punctilio is now quite devoid of functional significance, and that the aristocracy is no longer either politically the governing class or the leader of the nation in war, or even in anything at all, is beside the present point, which is that there it still is, still believing in its own superiority and still exerting a curiously irrational and meaningless influence over the lives of other people. It could not have held this influence either without opening its ranks to recruits from plutocracy and political success or if it had opened them so wide as plainly to invalidate its hereditary claims. It has in fact kept them just open and just closed enough to make admission still a privilege, while admitting so many of the new rich as to win over this powerful class to the side of maintaining its claims.

Just how wide open aristocracy has become in these latter days we can illustrate by a few significant figures. In the peerage 28 per cent of the existing titles have been created since 1900, and more than half of the total since



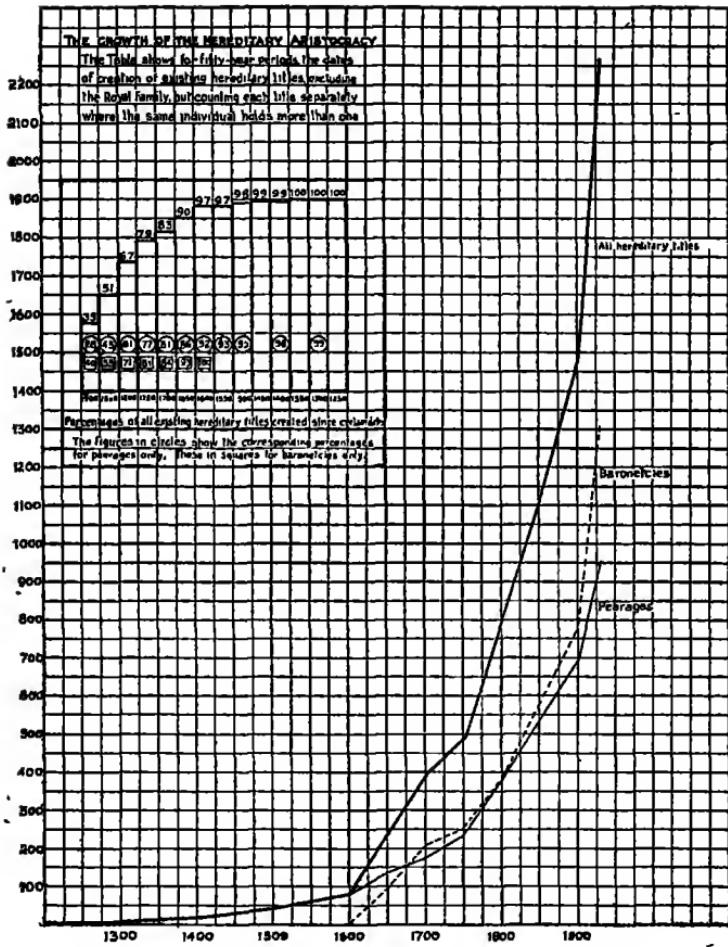
## I. ARISTOCRACY

1830, when the Whigs celebrated their return to power by passing the first Reform Act and creating no less than fifty still surviving peerages in a single decade. More than a hundred existing peerages were created between 1871 and 1900, and less than one-fifth of all the peerages that now exist go back further than the eighteenth century. Only one peer in twelve has a title created before 1600.

The story is the same with the baronets. Of all existing baronetries, 40 per cent have been created since 1900 and, 55 per cent since 1851. Only 30 per cent go back beyond 1801, and only 16 per cent further than the eighteenth century. Taking peers and baronets together, more than one-third of all extant hereditary titles have been created during the twentieth century, more than one half since 1850, and more than two-thirds since 1800. Only 10 per cent go back beyond the middle of the seventeenth century, and only 3 per cent beyond 1600.

Our existing titled aristocracy is thus for the most part of quite recent creation. Doubtless until the end of the nineteenth century most of the new creations were made from the ranks of the untitled gentry, with only a sprinkling of successful merchants, employers, soldiers and politicians from other classes. But of the more recent creations a very large proportion are "new men"; and in addition to this the "blue blood" of the aristocrats has been more and more mingled by marriage with ordinary red blood from the veins of plebeians in the possession of riches, or less often beauty, or still less often, both.

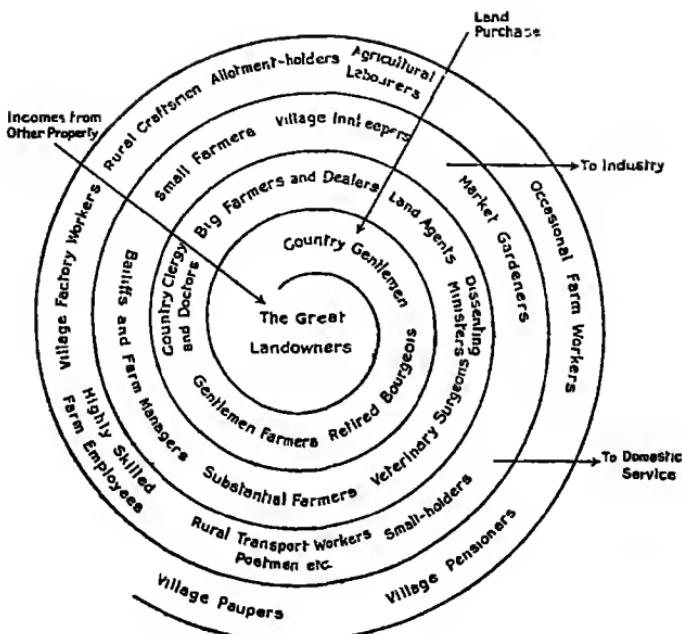
The homage paid to titles nowadays is inextricably mixed up with the homage paid to wealth and success. The "vulgar" usually do not distinguish among lords and ladies, at any rate beyond the first generation. They may remember for a little while that Lord So-and-so was a newspaper proprietor, or a soap-boiler, or a political hack, or that Lord This-and-that married a chorus girl or the



daughter of a plebeian millionaire. They are quite unlikely to remember who were the next Lord So-and-so's and the next Lord This-and-that's father and mother. "Society" will remember, discreetly or indiscreetly as the situation prompts it; but nowadays "society" cannot afford to be too particular. There are doubtless still two aristocracies, one recognised by the inner voice of "society" itself and the other by the main body of the people. But these two aristocracies are nowadays getting more and more mixed up. After all, it is usually no more than a question of how long ago a socially disreputable ancestor established the family fortunes.

It is most convenient to pass next to the hierarchy of the interests connected with the land, which is by tradition most closely associated with the aristocracy of title and family. So far we have been dealing with a socially exclusive class or group which does not extend beyond persons who possess special social pretensions resting on wealth or blood. But now we come to a social grouping which spreads right down from the great landowners at the top to the agricultural labourers near the bottom, with the village idiot and the rural pauper at a yet lower level. Let us try again to make a picture for our guidance.

In Great Britain only about 6 per cent of the occupied population now works on the land, and the numbers and proportion of land workers are continually falling. But the landed and agricultural interests continue to be of great political and social importance. Socially this importance is largely aristocratic, and we have considered it already in that aspect. But the survival of the feudal structure in the English land system, with its familiar trinity of landlord, tenant-farmer and labourer, enables the landlord class still to wield vast influence in the villages and smaller market towns. Politically, the landed interest still dominates the House of Lords, and is powerful in the House of Commons



## II. THE LAND

as well because of the large number of county constituencies in which it is still the predominant political influence.

The landed interests are of special importance because they are always on the brink of ruin. When Great Britain was becoming the "workshop of the world," the economic interests of the cultivators of the soil were deliberately postponed to those of the trading and manufacturing classes. The great landlords, mostly with a foot in both camps, were able amply to recoup themselves out of the proceeds of their investments in commerce, industry and transport, and out of the rapidly rising incomes derived from urban ground rents. The smaller landed proprietors possessed these opportunities to a far less extent, and in some cases not at all. But even they were able largely to make good by sending out their sons into the rapidly rising professions, or into lucrative posts in commerce and finance, or in the public services at home or abroad. The tenant farmers were able to some extent to secure lower rents, and, by changing their methods and products, to continue in agriculture on a profitable basis, though a good number emigrated and a number more were driven off the land into the towns. The worst sufferers were the very small occupying owners, and the agricultural labourers who stayed on the land. It is true that the growing demand for labour in mines and factories and other industrial occupations enabled a good many of the labourers to better themselves by migration. But those who were left on the land were impoverished not only by low wages but also by the loss of many of the more active and intelligent among the rural workers, who might, if they had stayed, have served them as leaders. Consequently they remained in mental as well as economic subjection to the landed interest, to whose fortunes they were bound by tradition as well as by the appearance of a unity of objective. For to whom, if not to the "gentlemanly" party, were they to look for a revival

of the profitability of agriculture and therewith to a possibility of exacting higher wages for their work? The agricultural areas, except in strongholds of Nonconformity, which had close affiliations with the Liberal Party, became vast Tory reserves, relied upon to send to Parliament a solid phalanx of politicians who, in fact, did nothing for agriculture, but had at any rate far closer connections with it than most of their Liberal opponents.

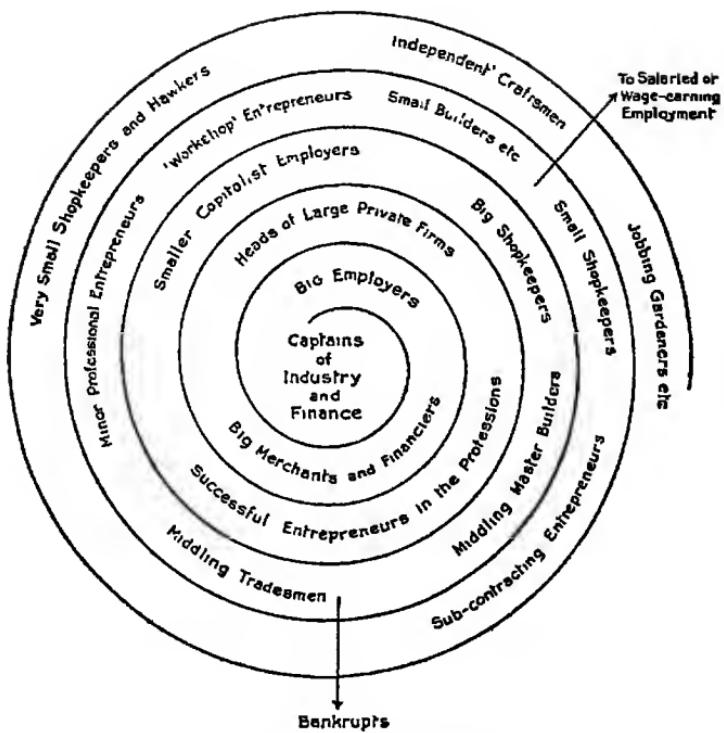
The agricultural interests have thus been a cross-section of English society. Rarely have the agricultural labourers played any considerable part in the working-class movement. Joseph Arch got them organised for a few years in the early 'seventies, and they flocked into the trade unions again for a few years during and immediately after the war, when the interruption of food supplies had set a temporary premium on home agricultural output. But on both occasions adversity soon allowed organisation to crumble, and the rural workers relapsed for the most part to their old political and social allegiance.

As for the farmers, England has no peasantry, and agrarian agitation has therefore never taken in this country a radical form. There are smallholders scattered about the country, and Scotland has its Highland crofters, who have been usually on the Radical side. But most farmers are employers of labour, though it be only in a small way. Moreover, many of them are employers who find a good deal of difficulty in making ends meet. This helps to make them bad employers, intent on keeping down wages to the lowest possible point. The desire for protection against agricultural imports, which would enable them to secure higher prices in the expanding home market, has been continually strong in their minds; and their suspicious dislike of townsmen who deny them this protection has ranged them mostly on the landowners' side—the more so because the landowners under the English system have

been usually suppliers of fixed capital, with an active interest in the land, and not mere absentee exacters of rent. The farming interest is almost solidly Tory and anti-Socialist, except in a few oases of strong Nonconformity.

Even when farming has been relatively profitable, the villages have for generations been England's depressed areas. They have in them something of the psychology of an oppressed people, disposed to subordinate its internecine disputes to its common quarrel with the urban interests. The village bickers, but in the last resort it usually hangs together, wherever the old system survives. But of late the isolation of the village, which was a powerful factor in its sense of unity, has been breaking down. The war did something to break it by widening the villagers' experience ; and the motor omnibus and the wireless are doing a great deal more. The villager can visit the town with growing ease ; and the town nowadays comes to visit him. The gap in vocabulary and habits of thought between countryman and townsman is getting narrower ; and with this goes a gradual dissolution of the ancient narrow loyalties. The villagers in the mass are by no means yet well disposed to listen to Socialism ; for Socialism is only beginning to work out the rudiments of a policy appropriate to village needs. But, great as the political and social differences between town and country still are, they are becoming less. This helps Socialists to offer the countryman a more intelligible programme ; and the village labourer at any rate is getting both more willing and more able to listen to Socialist arguments.'

Our third clue to the social structure of Great Britain is to be sought among the *entrepreneurs*—that is, among those who set out to make money by offering things for sale and by assuming the risks involved in active business enterprise. Here again we have not a horizontal class, but another vertical section of society. Let us again try to give a picture of it.



### III. THE ENTREPRENEURS

At the centre of this group are the "Great Captains of Industry and Finance," the men who, as heads of huge concerns or directors of many companies, manipulate millions, not by directly managing the business of production, but rather by practising the arts of high finance. These are the men who form great "mergers," the men who say "Yes" or "No" to hopeful inventors or technicians in search of someone powerful enough to take up their ideas, the men who engineer booms or slumps in the stock and produce markets ; and these are the men whom statesmen usually make their principal confidants in dealing with economic questions. They become peers, or at least baronets, at will ; and what they say goes—even to the accompaniment of a good many other people's money. A few of them are competent technicians, but most are not. For the majority of the Captains of Industry the supreme technique is that of high finance. Having mastered that, what more do they need to know ?

Immediately beneath these great ones stand the big employers and merchants whose fortunes are principally wrapped up in a single business. There is no sharp line between these two groups, but there is a broad distinction. The great financier is commonly a gadabout : he can never keep his hands from manipulating something. The big employer or merchant sticks closely to one thing, or at least to one group of things. He is a cotton man or a coal man or a steel man, rather than a great financier or "Captain of Industry" pure and simple.

Beneath these again are the heads of middle-sized businesses which have retained their personal or family character. We reach here the stratum that does not get much into the newspapers, or acquire a handle to its name almost as a matter of course. The majority of successful merchants and private manufacturers in highly capitalised industries belong to this group, and so do the heads of some

big chain and department stores. This group provides the principal part of the active membership of most of the leading trade associations, in which its members act usually under the leadership of the big men from the groups higher up, but sometimes kick over the traces when the big men want to interfere with the customary ways of doing business.

We come next to the smaller employers who have still a considerable capital, their own or borrowed, sunk in their businesses, and therewith to the more prosperous shopkeepers immediately below the level of the great stores. With these rank successful proprietors of provincial theatres and cinemas and other places of amusement, owners of big garages, and so on. Economically at much the same level are the owners of successful private schools and other profit-making service institutions ; but these prefer to be considered as part of the "professional" cross-section of society, and we shall take account of them there.

Next come still smaller employers in control of their small factories or substantial workshops, middle-sized builders, and the general run of shop-keepers of the more prosperous grades. Next again are the proprietors of smaller workshops, sometimes no more than sub-contractors for larger firms, and with them small builders and the most successful among jobbing craftsmen, gardeners and street dealers, who have become capitalists enough to employ a little labour side by side with their own. Finally we come to the general run of "independent" or "jobbing" workers, tradesmen in very tiny shops, dressmakers, ladies who take in typing, minor hawkers with barrows, etc., down to the charwoman who divides her service between several employers, and the socially inferior dressmaker who attends to make up "ladies' own materials."

This catalogue is necessary in order to show that, under the existing system, the *entrepreneur*, the undertaker of work at his own risk and not for a fixed wage or salary, is not by

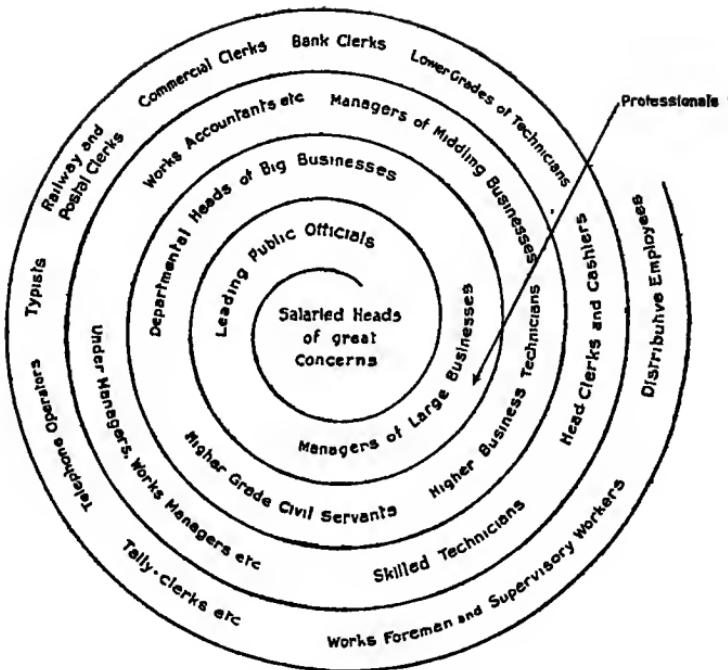
any means of necessity a member of the middle classes. Profit-making enterprise spreads very far down the social scale : it is the settled habit of a large section among the poor as well as the rich. It is true that, near the bottom of the scale, the lines of demarcation between *entrepreneurs* and wage-earners get blurred. How, for example, are we to classify a jobbing gardener, or a share fisherman, or a charwoman who works by the day ? But, even if the doubtful classes are left out, there remain the tiny shopkeepers and hawkers, the "independent" craftsmen and sub-contractors in petty workshops making up goods for bigger firms.

Hope spreads far, but not all the way, down this hierarchy of profit-making. The charwoman and the lady who takes in typing may have no hopes. But at any rate up to middle age most of the rest are aspirants. The small shopkeeper hopes to turn into a larger shopkeeper and perhaps, to open branch shops, the small employer hopes to build up a considerable business, the head of a considerable business hopes to turn it into a great one, and the head of a great business often aspires to rise into the aristocracy of finance. Except at the very bottom, the "career" is open to the talent for acquisition, and more wealth means social as well as economic advancement. Doubtless it becomes more difficult to rise in the scale as the advantage of massed capital over small-scale enterprise increases, and as impersonal joint stock enterprise under salaried management displaces private business over a widening area. But there are enough new and developing trades in these days still to give the pushful man a chance, and, despite the growth of huge stores and chains of shops under unified control, the small and middle-sized shopkeepers plunge as eagerly as ever into the fray. Failures are many, and disappointed hopes still more. But there is enough hope still left to tempt the aspirant with the lure of being his own master, and

perhaps, if he is lucky, building up a substantial business of his own.

Of course the members of this hierarchy mostly feel themselves threatened by Socialism with absolute extinction. Even more than agriculture, the *entrepreneur* sector is the individualist sector of contemporary society. For every person in it, and most of all everyone near the bottom, is trying to carve out a place for himself in competition with the rest. Big employers near the top may think increasingly in terms of trusts and monopolies : but much larger numbers lower down the scale are fighting one another for their lives. The psychological effects of the growth of monopolistic combination in large-scale business are often greatly exaggerated. The great majority of the *entrepreneurs* taken together are still fighting one another tooth and nail as the necessary condition of survival, or at any rate of success. The law of the jungle still holds throughout the range of small-scale business enterprise; and capitalism on the grand scale shows no sign of abolishing the small *entrepreneur*, but only of compelling him to fight harder for his life.

Our fourth clue must be sought among the salary-earners, who form another hierarchy side by side with the *entrepreneurs* and run almost as far both up and down the social scale. With the growth of joint stock enterprise and of the public services a great many jobs that were formerly 'done by *entrepreneurs*' have come to be done by salaried employees. There are at one end of the scale salaried officials drawing many thousands a year, and at the other, typists and junior clerks earning no more than the majority of the wage-earners. Indeed, near the top it is often difficult to distinguish at all clearly between *entrepreneurs* and salary-earners. The head of a business which has assumed the form of a joint stock company may pay himself a salary, and the chief salaried employee of a great public company may rank with the great *entrepreneurs* in economic and social



#### IV. THE SALARIAT

status and in public influence as the representative of large-scale capital. Bank chairmen, railway presidents and general managers, and the managing directors of other great impersonal concerns, count in effect among the "upper ten" of profit-seekers, though they get their remuneration largely in the form of salaries. Of course most of these great men do not live wholly on their salaries. Most of them have been "let in on the ground floor." Some of them have a share in the profits of the businesses they control in addition to their salaries. Many have other directorships for which they receive fees, and most have investments outside the businesses from which their salaries are drawn. These other sources of income give them a further common interest with the general body of property-owners. They take as a rule a capitalist view, and regard their function in industry as the extraction of profit on behalf of the general body of shareholders. However much pride they may have in the businesses they direct, and however much desire to do their jobs well, they feel themselves to be the representatives of those who own the capital—and who, at any rate in theory, appoint them—rather than the colleagues of the workers in a common service.

This capitalistic sentiment reaches, of course, a good deal further down the ranks of the salariat. Not only the great men at the head of vast concerns, but the responsible managing directors of smaller businesses and the departmental and works managers and assistant managers have largely the same attitude, which may extend also to the technical experts, accountants, head cashiers, buyers, travellers, head salesmen—in fact to all those whose salaries are large enough to give them a feeling of privilege and of superiority to the common run of "black-coats" as well as to the manual workers. The possession of small incomes from property, or the concession of some sort of bonus or share in the profits of the business which they serve

is common among many of these grades ; and they have of course all the sense of owing their appointments to the men "higher up," who are in turn the direct representatives of the capitalist owners. Their function, the job they are appointed to do, is to help the firm to make profits ; and as they have usually—with the exception of some of the technicians—little professional organisation or sense of solidarity among themselves, there is no counter-loyalty to draw them away from the pursuit of profit-making.

The middle salariat of industry and commerce is indeed very conscious of its superiority in economic and social status to the mass below, and very anxious to preserve its position. Only as we proceed towards the lower-paid salary-earners, leaving aside for the moment the professional technicians, do we meet with any tendency to think more in terms of collective action for the maintenance and improvement of the conditions of employment, and less in terms of purely individual prestige and advancement. But even in the lower paid groups of salary-earners, collective organisation is usually very weak. Of clerks outside the public services and the railways only a few handfuls here and there are organised at all ; and even among the lower-paid technicians organisation is usually feeble and in many cases carefully kept in subordination to the higher-paid technicians who exclusively control the big professional institutions of engineers, accountants, surveyors and the rest. Of these more will be said when the time comes to speak of the more strictly professional groups. Here our main concern is with the general body of salary-earners who do not belong to recognised and highly developed professional associations.

At the lower end of the salariat come, on the one hand, the ordinary run of clerks and typists, and on the other, promoted manual workers who have been appointed to minor supervisory positions as foremen or the like. The members

of these grades have often been trade unionists before their promotion ; and a few of them remain in their trade unions on account of the friendly benefits, though they are compelled to sever all active connection with trade union affairs. Because of their past contacts, employers are often at great pains to keep these supervisory workers apart from the wage-earners. They form for them mutual benefit societies subsidised from the funds of the firm and open only to those who renounce trade unionism and all its works. They din into them that, as " staff " employees of the firm, they owe exclusive loyalty to it, and none at all to the workers over whom they are set. A strike by foremen is a terrible offence ; and for the most part no sort of collective bargaining is tolerated among them.

The foremen for their part, though there are among them good Socialists who have never abandoned their earlier loyalties, have the feeling of being set above their fellow-workers in a social as well as an economic sense. Their feet are upon the capitalist ladder : they have taken superior service under the capitalist system. It is their business to get hard work out of those whose labours they superintend, in order that the firm may be successful in making profits for the shareholders. Of course, quite apart from this consideration they may want to do their job efficiently from a sense of pride in it, but they cannot help knowing themselves to be " employers' men " rather than colleagues of the wage-earners in a common service. Indeed the wage-earners will constantly remind them of this, for not the least of the foreman's trials is the changed attitude towards him of many of those with whom he previously worked side by side. If the foreman often " turns nasty," that is partly because he knows himself suspect of deserting the workers' cause in accepting promotion.

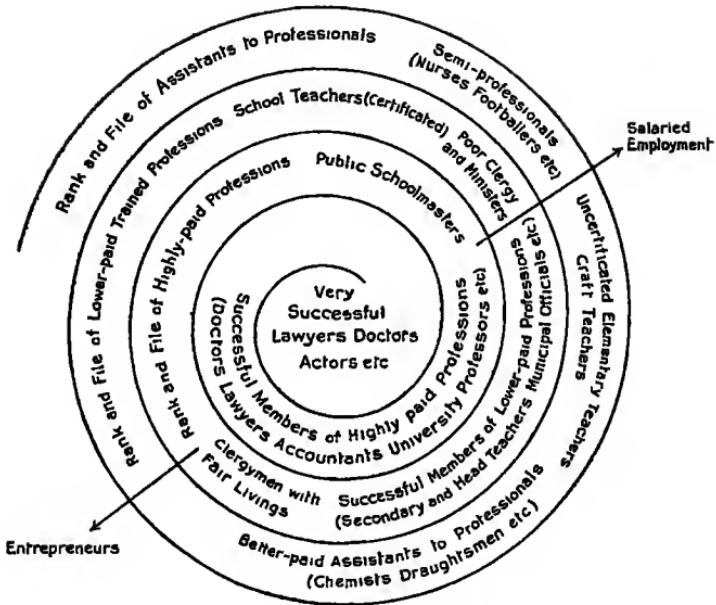
These trials are less, though they are by no means absent, in the public services. For where the public is the employer

there is often some approach to a general sense of belonging to a common service embracing both the inferior and the superior grades. Moreover, in the public services, where there is but a single employer, and there are usually regular scales of salaries as well as wages to bargain about, the non-manual workers have shown a far greater tendency to organise themselves than in private industry or commerce. The supervisory grades are largely organised on the railways also, and to some extent in the banks : but in the latter case the higher officials flatly refuse to have any dealings with the independent Bank Officers' Guild, and attempt to defeat organisation by means of "kept" staff associations under their own control. Of course, even where organisation does exist, as in the Civil Service, this does not prevent the higher grades from feeling superior and clinging tightly to their privileges. But on occasion in the public services higher and lower grades of salary-earners have acted together, and some of the lower grades have even shown a tendency to make common cause with the manual workers. Hence the section in the reactionary Trade Union Act of 1927 which prohibits public employees from joining or federating with trade unions mainly consisting of workers outside the public service.

The salary-earners thus constitute another vertical grouping in society, stretching almost to the top of the social scale and stopping not very far short of the bottom. They are, moreover, a rapidly increasing group. The development of impersonal joint stock enterprise and the "rationalisation" of businesses into larger units increase the number of highly paid salary-earners. The growing complexity of cost accounting, salesmanship and advertising, and other forms of "oncost," adds more and more to the numbers of the clerical workers, whereas the advance of mechanisation reduces the proportion of manual workers employed. Mechanisation has, indeed, begun its invasion

of clerical work ; but the typewriter caused more letters rather than less clerks, and calculating and other office machines have so far had a similar tendency. They do, indeed, reduce the proportion of more to less skilled clerical employees. But apart from the typewriter, office mechanisation has not yet spread far beyond the very largest establishments. When it does, there is a bad time coming for the more highly paid grades of the routine clerical service.

In considering the salary-earners, I have as far as possible left out of account the "professionals" in the stricter sense—that is, those who belong to clearly defined and "closed" professions, which can be entered only by means of high educational qualifications and usually involve fairly stiff qualifying examinations. The professionals, in this sense, are divided into two groups, which cut across the technical demarcation between one profession and another. Some of them live by salaries, and some by fees. To the former group belong most of the industrial technicians, though side by side with the salary-earners there are "consultants," who often employ qualified salaried assistants of their own. These consultants are in effect a sort of *entrepreneurs* who undertake the risks of business in much the same way as merchants. Even in the predominantly fee-earning professions—the law, medicine, accountancy, architecture—there has been in recent times a great increase in the number of salary-earners, largely on account of the rapid growth of national and local public employment. Teaching is predominantly a profession of salary-earners, but includes schoolmasters who conduct "private venture" schools for profit, and some fee-taking "coaches," as well as many specialist teachers, particularly in the arts. Salaried workers in these fields include most of those engaged in research, either for business firms or in special institutions. Some professionals, such as part-time Medical



## V. THE PROFESSIONS

Officers of Health, or Justices' Clerks, live partly by salaries and partly by private practice. Generally the institutions which control the organised professions frown on the joint stock company ; and professional *entrepreneurs* usually conduct either individual business or private partnerships. These methods are possible because for the most part professional undertakings do not require a very large capital.

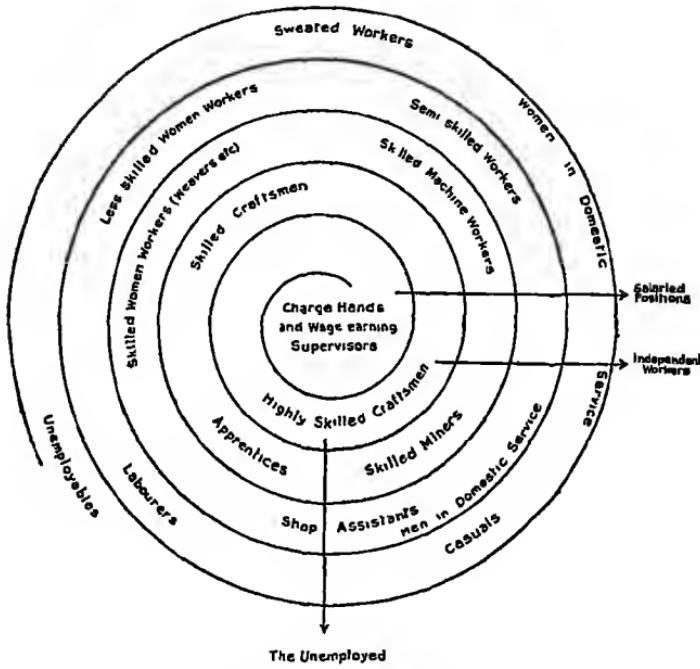
Those professionals who live by fees employ under them a considerable number of salaried workers, of whom some are ordinary clerks, typists and cashiers, while others are themselves professionals either of the same or of a less highly considered calling. Thus, an architect may have assistant architects under him, or a headmaster assistant schoolmasters. But the architect will employ also draughtsmen and tracers as well as clerks, and the headmaster a matron and perhaps a trained nurse besides groundsmen and ordinary domestic staff. The medical services involve large numbers of nurses and assistants as well as doctors and dentists, and so on in many other cases.

Thus the professions have also their higher and lower ranges, and extend a good way down as well as up the social scale. The very successful doctor, the headmaster of a great "public" school, the Master or Vice-Chancellor or Principal of an important college or university, the practising barrister of renown, the leading solicitor, architect or accountant, all rank high up in the social hierarchy, although the possible money rewards are very much greater in some of these professions than in others. Next to these outstanding figures comes the general run of successful practitioners in the better paid professions, then the not so successful, overlapping with the most successful members of some of the professions that are in general worse paid and less monopolised by "gentlemen." Next, the rank and file of the worst paid professions,

pretty much on a par socially and economically with the better paid among the assistants who serve the more highly qualified professionals ; and, finally the general run of assistants, roughly on a level with the lower grades of the salary-earners in non-professional employment.

Sixthly, we come to the wage-earners, who constitute by far the largest section of the occupied population. Wage-earning starts, of course, much lower down the social scale than most of the groupings we have considered so far ; but it too has a considerable number of grades, with a wide diversity of income and social status. At the top stands a relatively small group of manual workers of exceptional skill, including charge-hands who are at the head of co-operating squads of less skilled workers, highly skilled tool-setters, maintenance men and repair workers, the most skilled compositors, coal trimmers, engineering mechanics, steel smelters, and so on through a range of occupations demanding scarce qualities of high skill or exceptional manual dexterity. Next comes the general run of skilled craftsmen, who enter a trade either by way of apprenticeship, as in many of the older crafts, or by getting their training through a period of service as assistants to skilled craftsmen, as in cotton-spinning, engine-driving, and many other occupations. With this grade belong the apprentices, who expect to emerge as skilled craftsmen with a "right to a trade." This is the group in which trade unionism has always been most strongly organised.

Below the skilled craftsmen comes the rapidly growing body of semi-skilled workers, dexterous machine-minders engaged chiefly in mass production. This group usually passes through no apprenticeship, and is by no means so clearly defined as the skilled group, upon whose sphere of activity it is continually encroaching. Comparatively few women in industry are able to rise above this semi-skilled grade, partly for reasons of custom but also partly



## VI. THE PROLETARIAT

because most women leave wage-earning employment on marriage, and apprenticeship therefore fails to fit their case.

Below the semi-skilled machine-minders come the labourers, whose numbers mechanisation is doing something to reduce by substituting mechanical handling of heavy materials and products for the old way of hauling things about by hand. With the labourers rank the less skilled women workers in ordinary factory trades. Finally, there are the sweated home-workers, who persist in spite of Trade Boards, casuals on the margin of employment, and the ageing or partially disabled from the higher groups, who subsist often precariously on light jobs and often depend in part for their living on compensation allowances or old age pensions or on poor relief.

The relations between skilled and less skilled workers differ greatly from one industry to another. In some—building, engineering and printing, for example—there is a gulf fixed between the usually apprenticed skilled man and the machine-worker or labourer. At any rate, there used to be a gulf between these groups ; and the skilled workers' trade unions, in their efforts to preserve their limited monopolies of labour, still try to exclude the unapprenticed workers from their trades wherever they can. In other cases—the railway service, the textile trades, mining, and many of the newer industries—there is no such sharp division between grades, and promotion to the more skilled jobs takes place mainly by "up-grading" from below. Trade union organisation reflects these differences. In the former group of industries skilled and semi-skilled workers are most often organised in separate societies, whereas the latter group tends towards "industrial unionism," or at any rate towards some form of departmental organisation which brings skilled and less skilled workers within the ranks of a single society.

In the industries in which the gap between skilled and less skilled workers is wide, the distinction between them has in the past been to a large extent hereditary. The children of the craftsman have tended to become craftsmen and the labourer's children labourers. But the rapid growth of semi-skilled occupations is helping to reduce the importance of this cleavage. The labourer's children can now rise somewhat more easily into the semi-skilled grade ; and the craftsmen, especially in the declining industries, are unable to find room for all their children in the skilled crafts. Of course the skilled workers' children also provide numerous recruits for the clerical services and the lower-paid ranges of professional work ; and this tendency becomes accentuated as skilled manual jobs get scarcer, whereas the volume of clerical and professional employment continues to grow.

In general the tendency among the wage-earners is towards a narrowing of social and economic differences. This is due largely to the rapid advance of mechanisation, which helps to reduce the demand for skilled craftsmen at one end of the scale and for quite unskilled labour at the other end. Something has also been done to reduce the quantity of absolute hard physical labour demanding sheer brute strength ; and some advance was being made towards decasualisation until the growth of unemployment reintroduced the problem in an aggravated form.

Indeed, the prevalence of unemployment and its exceptional concentration in certain depressed industries and areas have largely upset the established internal divisions within the wage-earning class. Many skilled craftsmen, accustomed previously to a relatively high level of pay and status, have found themselves degraded through prolonged unemployment below the status and standards of unskilled workers in more prosperous industries ; and these *déclassés* within the proletarian ranks have become

almost a separate group, often embittered by their experience and driven either into political apathy or into the advocacy of militant proletarian doctrines. However, concentrated largely in certain depressed areas, these unfortunates have been unable to communicate their attitude to the main body of trade unionists. They have remained a group apart: with the consequence that there exists to-day within the proletariat two distinct types of stratification, one between skilled and less-skilled workers, and the other between workers in prosperous and in depressed trades. The first of these stratifications, as we have seen, is becoming more or less obsolete. But the second has become more important as unemployment has been prolonged, though its effect is of course modified by some migration out of the depressed industries and areas wherever work can be found in the expanding trades.

Finally, we come to our seventh class, the owners of property.<sup>1</sup> The correlative to the huge growth of fixed capital instruments of production since the Industrial Revolution has been the growth of the ownership of capital assets by persons who play no part in their use or, effectively, in their control. Joint stock enterprise is the correlative of large-scale production. Now, the most important characteristic of joint stock enterprise is the successful reconciliation under it of the concentrated control and operation of capital with the diffusion of ownership over a wide field. Until the joint stock system was extended to cover most forms of substantial business enterprise the field for investment for those who did not propose to use their money as *entrepreneurs* was very narrow. The ownership of land, or of stock in the public funds or in a few great chartered concerns such as the Bank of England and the East India and

<sup>1</sup> In this case I have not attempted to draw a figure; for the property-owners cannot be graded separately in any way that admits of diagrammatic presentation.

South Sea Companies, provided almost the only outlets open to possessors of free capital who were neither financiers nor merchants nor industrial employers, but needed to put out their money in such profit-yielding ways as would allow them to have their capital back if they needed it. Loans could, of course, be placed privately, often through attorneys or rudimentary local banks. But money so lent had commonly to be locked up for long periods and could not be readily recovered by sale of the "paper" representing it in the same way as securities quoted on the modern stock exchanges can be transferred from hand to hand.

The rapid growth of wealth after the Industrial Revolution created both an active demand for capital and a mounting supply in the hands of the upper and middle classes ; and the joint stock company in its modern form was the device found for bringing supply and demand together. It was made possible for the relatively small saver to be, at far less trouble and risk than before, a co-partner in large-scale enterprise, without needing to assume any real part in the management of his capital. At the same time the co-operative society, with its fixed interest-bearing share capital and loan stock, provided an outlet for the still smaller savings made by the better-paid members of the working class ; and friendly societies, insurance companies, and to a smaller extent trade unions, began to build up funds which were largely the accumulations of very small savers against a "rainy day." In these ways the ownership of property came to be very widely, though very unequally, diffused ; and, despite the growing concentration of the actual use of capital in the hands of large-scale *entrepreneurs*, the number of persons with a financial stake in the profitability of business enterprise was very greatly increased.

To-day most of the better-paid members of the working class who are getting on towards middle age have at any

rate some small savings, which bring them in a little income, and often small insurance policies, as well as claims to benefit from friendly societies or trade unions. Many of them own or are in process of buying their own houses, usually through a building society. In these ways they have become used to the idea of interest on money, but not to the same extent to the idea of profits ; for working-class investments in stocks and shares bearing a variable return are in Great Britain very small in amount. However, the receipt of interest on savings is not so very far off profit-taking ; and the wider diffusion of the investing habit has done something to make the better-paid workers more tolerant of the view expressed a few years ago by a well-known trade union leader that "capital must have its dividend."

Above the ranks of the manual workers and the lower paid "black-coats" the habit of investment is very widely spread. Most professional men, most of the better-paid salary-earners, most substantial farmers, in fact most people above the upper working-class level of income, own some stocks and shares, and derive some part of their means of living, even if it be often but a small part, from the ownership of capitalist property, including public debt. Most *entrepreneurs*, except the very smallest, have some capital holdings outside their own businesses ; and a host of widows, spinsters and other "unoccupied" persons live, meanly or well, upon dividends or interest or rents from house property or incomes charged upon the revenues of some family business or estate. The enormous growth of public debts has further enlarged the ranks of the *rentiers* ; and what with annuities, pensions and the like, the number of persons dependent on incomes payable either out of the proceeds of taxation or out of the funds of vast collective agencies for investment, such as the insurance companies, mounts up very high. Many of these incomes from property

are quite small ; but, whatever their size, those who depend mainly upon them are apt to feel that their fortunes are bound up with the system of private property and therefore with the survival of profit-making enterprise.

This is the highly complex social and economic situation which has to be faced by Socialists in Great Britain. To evaluate it in terms of actual numbers is by no means easy. We know, indeed, from the statistics relating to the surtax, that the number of persons with taxable incomes of more than £2,000 a year is only about 100,000,<sup>1</sup> out of a total of about 22 million persons in receipt of some sort of income.<sup>2</sup> There are, however, unfortunately, no figures showing the distribution of incomes between £2,000 and £250 a year, though it would be perfectly easy for the income tax authorities to supply these figures if they had a mind. Probably about 2 million persons, or substantially less than 10 per cent of all those who are in receipt of incomes, get as much as £250 a year, and perhaps 15 millions as much as £3 a week. But these figures by themselves do not tell us much. For what we really want to know is not only the broad division between those above and below £250 a year but also the graduation between £250 and £2,000. In all probability this graduation follows approximately the course of the Pareto line<sup>3</sup> ; but we cannot be sure of this in the absence of any direct statistical information.

We can, however, add to these figures our knowledge that in 1929 rather more than 5 million persons were assessed

<sup>1</sup> It was 107,000 in 1929 and only 84,000 in 1933. But profit incomes are now again rising, and it is probable that the 1929 level will be very soon regained.

<sup>2</sup> Or 20 million if the unemployed are left out. They should, however, not be left out, for a figure of over 2 million unemployed by no means indicates a corresponding number of persons without incomes. The unemployed are a continually shifting body, and only a small fraction among them possesses no income at all, apart from what it receives by way of relief.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 76.

to income tax, and that this number included about 1,500,000 wage-earners. The income-tax payers, excluding the wage-earners, therefore numbered rather over three and a half million. The number of *entrepreneurs*, including independent workers, in this total has been estimated at something over a million, and the number of salary-earners at not far short of two and a half millions. This would leave somewhere about half a million persons living above the income tax level on incomes from property or ownership of one sort or another, as distinct from economic activity in producing wealth.

Another way of looking at the situation is to consider the distribution of incomes into broad categories, according to the forms in which they are received. Mr. Colin Clark<sup>1</sup> has estimated that in 1931 about 40 per cent of the net national income was paid out in wages and about 24 per cent in salaries, leaving about 36 per cent for rent, profits and interest, including incomes of these types derived from overseas investment. These percentages take no account of the redistribution of incomes through taxation, which of course modifies the final division to some extent.

A crude comparison between these proportions and the occupational distribution of the working population gives the following results. The wage-earners, who receive about 40 per cent of the national income, include about 76 per cent of the entire occupied population. The salary-earners, who get 24 per cent, number about 14 per cent of the occupied population. The employers and independent workers, whose shares in the national income cannot be separately estimated, are respectively about 4 per cent and about 6 per cent of the occupied population. In both these classifications the professional workers are of course split up between the salary-earning group and the employers' and independent workers' group.

<sup>1</sup> *The National Income*, p. 72.

These crude figures cannot, however, stand without further analysis ; and in order to arrive at more definite conclusions we must consider the distribution of both the occupied and the unoccupied population into social classes. The materials for this analysis are unfortunately most inadequate ; but we must make the most we can of them, allowing a wide margin for error when we attempt any interpretation of the crude figures. Let us begin by dividing the entire population of Great Britain into a few very broad groups according to age and pursuit or non-pursuit of what the Census describes as " gainful occupation."

	Gainfully Occupied in millions				Others in millions	
Under 14	..	..	—	..	..	10.1
14-18	..	..	2.1	..	..	0.9
Men 18-70	..	..	13.3	..	..	0.7
Women 18-70	..	..	5.3	..	..	10.4
Over 70	..	..	0.3	..	..	1.9
Totals	..	..	21.0	..	..	24.0

This leaves us to account for a gainfully occupied population of about 21 millions. Let us first roughly classify these occupied persons under a few broad occupational headings.

Industrial and Mining Occupations	..	9½ millions
Commercial and Clerical Occupations	..	4 millions
Transport and Communication	..	2 millions
Agricultural Occupations	..	1½ millions
Professional Occupations	..	1 million
Personal Service	..	2½ millions
Unclassified	..	½ million
Total (roughly)	..	21 millions

Of these 21 million persons, according to the most probable estimates based on the Census, about 850,000 are "employers," large or small, and about one and a quarter millions independent workers. Rather under 3 millions are salaried employees, and rather under 16 millions wage-earners.

In their book on *The Social Structure of England and Wales*, Professors Carr Saunders and Caradoc Jones have attempted, on a somewhat doubtful foundation, to classify the entire occupied population in accordance with the level of intellectual ability demanded of it, which is not quite the same thing as its economic status. This classification is for England and Wales only and not for Great Britain as a whole, and covers only adult male occupied persons and not women. It is clearly to some extent biased in favour of the claims of non-manual and purely intellectual work as against manual employment and business enterprise.

	Per cent of total				
Highest Professional Work .. .. ..	0·1				
Lower Professional and Technical Work ..	3·0				
Clerical and Highly Skilled Manual Work ..	12·0				
Skilled Labour and Minor Commercial Work ..	26·0				
Semi-Skilled Labour and Poorest Commercial Work .. .. .. ..	33·0				
Unskilled Labour .. .. .. ..	19·0				
Casual Labour .. .. .. ..	7·0				
Institutional Cases .. .. .. ..	0·2				

In another table the same authors analyse the professional workers of both sexes into two grades of higher and lower skill, separating men and women. Again the analysis covers only England and Wales.

## PROFESSIONAL WORKERS, ENGLAND AND WALES

		Thousands			
	More Highly Skilled			Less Highly Skilled	
Men ..	252	..	..	..	55
Women ..	135	..	..	..	225
Total ..	387	..	..	..	280

This classification includes civil servants, and apparently company and other business officials. The total which it yields is a good deal below that which is given by the figures of the Census of Occupations. Teachers of all grades are included ; but ordinary clerical workers up to the level of head clerks and such minor professionals as draughtsmen appear to be excluded. Officials and clerks in public employment together number about 250,000, excluding all manual workers but including local as well as national public services. The figures of the Census of 1931 give a total for Great Britain of 841,000 workers in professional occupations, including clerical staffs, of whom 295,000 are teachers, excluding music teachers. The teachers form by far the largest single professional group, followed by sick nurses, who number 139,000. Among the higher professionals the largest groups are the medical practitioners, numbering 33,000 ; the professional engineers, numbering 39,000 ; the authors and journalists, numbering 21,000 ; the artists, 17,000, and the chemists and metallurgists, 16,000.

This classification of professional occupations according to the Census does not include either actors, to the number of 19,000, or musicians, to the number of 28,000. Nor does it include any of the workers in public administration, of whom the Census gives a total of 31,000 national government and 22,000 local government officials, excluding clerical staffs. The clerks and draughtsmen in all occupations, who are classified together in the Census, number over one and a half millions.

With the aid of these figures, and of a number of others which I have not space to reproduce, I shall now proceed to draw up a very rough table showing the broad composition of British society to-day as between the wage-earning and other main groups.

TABLE A

## Industrial Proletariat

(Manufactures, Mines and Quarries, Transport and Communication) .. ..	<u>9½ millions</u>
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## Agricultural Proletariat

(Agricultural labourers, farmers' relatives working for wages) .. .. ..	<u>1 million</u>
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## Commercial Proletariat

(Shop Assistants, Warehouse Workers, Roundsmen, Vanmen, etc.) .. ..	<u>2½ millions</u>
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Workers in Personal Service and Miscellaneous Wage-earning Occupations ..	<u>3 millions</u>
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Total Wage-Earners .. ..	<u>16 millions</u>
of whom under 18 years .. ..	<u>2 millions</u>

Total Adult Wage-Earners ..	<u>14 millions</u>
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Salary-Earners .. .. .. ..	<u>3 millions</u>
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Independent Workers .. .. ..	<u>1½ millions</u>
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Non-Wage-Earning Occupied Persons. Total ..	<u>5 millions</u>
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Unoccupied Adult Males, ages 18-70 ..	<u>¾ million</u>
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The above table gives a rough classification of the occupied population according to social class, as between wage-earners, salary-earners and the rest. The groups of independent workers and employers are of course highly

miscellaneous, including large numbers of small employers and of independent workers whose status and income are very close to those of the rank and file of the wage-earners. It is, however, impossible to make a clearer separation. Evidence as to the number of persons belonging to the superior economic classes must be sought in the income-tax statistics rather than in the Census figures of occupational distribution.

I have included in the table, in addition to the occupied persons, the unoccupied adult males between the ages of eighteen and seventy, as these clearly constitute a group dependent for the most part on property incomes derived from the industrial activity of the remaining groups. It is more convenient to include them here than in the next table, because the purpose there is to make some attempt at estimating the proportion of women belonging by class affiliation to the various groups of occupied persons.

TABLE B

Total Wage-Earners over 18 .. ..	14 millions
of whom Women .. ..	5 millions
of whom Men .. ..	9 millions
—	—
Total Occupied Persons other than Wage-Earners over 18 .. ..	4½ millions
of whom Women .. ..	½ million
—	—
Total Male Occupied Persons other than Wage-Earners over 18 .. ..	4 millions
—	—
Total number of Women between 18 and 70 .. ..	16 millions (roughly)
of whom Gainfully Occupied .. ..	5½ millions
Total not Gainfully Occupied Women 18-70 .. ..	10½ millions

*Provisional Allocation of not gainfully occupied Women  
between Wage-Earners and others*

Not Gainfully Occupied Women, ages 18-70, of Wage-Earning Class .. .. .. ..	5½ millions
Not Gainfully Occupied Women, ages 18-70, of Other Classes	5 millions
<hr/>	
Total Wage-Earning Class, 18-70	19½ millions
Total Other Classes, 18-70 ..	11 millions
Total Population under 18 ..	13 millions
Total Population over 70 ..	2½ millions

On the basis of these figures, we can now attempt to look at the situation from the standpoint of the existing class divisions in British society. It is clear that, while the adult wage-earning class as a whole numbers over 14 millions, by no means all the groups included within it have in the past been equally disposed to think of themselves as forming part of the proletariat in any class-conscious sense. The working-class movement has drawn its strength preponderantly, and until very recent times almost exclusively, from the industrial proletariat, with only small contingents from the commercial proletariat and the agricultural wage-earners, and very few indeed from the large group concerned with personal service. Even if we include with the industrial proletariat one half of all the not gainfully occupied women whom we have assigned to the wage-earning class as a whole, its members mount up only to 11 millions, out of a total population between the ages of eighteen and seventy of rather under 30 millions. It is clear, then, that the groups constituting the industrial proletariat are nowhere near commanding by themselves a majority of the entire population. Even if we include with them the commercial proletariat, chiefly of workers engaged in the

distributive trades, and a section of the agricultural workers, this cannot bring the total number up to more than 15 millions at the outside, or just about half the total adult population under 70. Of course a section both among the salary-earners and among the independent workers, besides isolated individuals from the other social classes, has identified itself with the working-class movement ; and more may do so in the future. But my point here is to show that a purely proletarian movement within such groups as have yet shown any marked signs of proletarian class-consciousness cannot possibly hope, in a country like Great Britain, to command a clear majority of the population while the class structure remains as it is. If the Marxian prophecies were fulfilled, and the commercial and agricultural proletariat, together with the salary-earners and the main body of "independent" workers, were flung down by adversity into the proletarian ranks, then, indeed, a clear majority would be evidently attainable. But to accomplish this would require a far greater degree of capitalist decline than has come about even at the bottom of the existing depression. Such a decline may indeed come ; for, if the arguments advanced earlier in this book are correct, the capitalist system has now entered upon a restrictive phase, whatever upward and downward movements it may go through in the course of its further decay. But it would certainly be unwise to reckon on this process of dissolution advancing fast enough to make a proletarian majority possible in the near future.

Moreover, if the capitalist system does decline further, the first effect of its decline on the minds of the semi-proletariat of commercial wage-earners, salary-earners, and the better-off "independent" workers is unlikely, as we have seen earlier in this book, to be a mass conversion of these intermediate groups to the Socialist side. There will doubtless be among them, if they feel increasingly the pinch of

adversity, a growing number who will see in Socialism the remedy for their distresses. But a substantial proportion of them are likely to take the opposite view, and to endeavour by every means in their power to hold on to their threatened position of semi-privilege in relation to the mass of the proletariat. Indeed, quite a number whose position is economically actually worse than that of the main body of organised wage-earners are likely to cling desperately to their scanty hopes of making a living in the old way by tiny-scale forms of private enterprise or by personal service rather than undertake the great adventure of joining with the proletariat to inaugurate a new way of living together in society. For this new way of living is bound to involve, above all for those engaged in the various forms of personal service and tiny-scale "independent" occupation, a profound change in their habits of life. The great mass of the workers now engaged in rendering personal service to the members of the richer classes, either in private houses or in hotels, clubs, and other upper- and middle-class institutions, will have to find new methods of earning a living; and, even if very small-scale enterprise survives for a considerable time, it is certain to meet with an increasing encroachment both from large-scale productive industry and from the co-operative movement. No one will argue that the groups now engaged in personal service or in small-scale trading and similar occupations are for the most part possessed of lively imaginations or of any large power of generalising beyond their immediate experience. They are accordingly likely to prove difficult to bring over to the contemplation of a society in which their accustomed ways of earning a livelihood will be either made impossible for them or at any rate threatened with gradual supersession. The new type of society may in fact offer to them more eligible opportunities for employment and better incomes than most of them have been able to snatch for themselves.

under capitalism. But the older members of these groups will be to a large extent unadaptable to changed methods of living, and the fact that Socialism offers greater prospects and opportunities for their children than the vast majority of them can hope to provide will probably not weigh very greatly with them when they decide on which side to take their stand. A number of the younger members of these social groups will doubtless rally to the side of Socialism, because their imaginations have not yet been deadened by experience, and also because they will feel capable of carving out for themselves new careers under the changed conditions which Socialism will introduce. But there will be a dead weight of ageing flunkies, ageing small tradespeople, and the like, who, poor as many of them are, will be the very last persons to be won over to the Socialist cause.

Accordingly, paradoxical as it may appear on a strictly economic interpretation, the hope of winning converts to Socialism is far greater among certain of the social grades that are well above the proletarian levels of income and social status than among certain sections of the poorer wage-earners and the lowest grades of those gainfully occupied in non wage-earning vocations. There is far more hope of converting the salary-earner or the technician or the professional man to a Socialist point of view than of converting the great majority of tradespeople or domestic servants or very small employers. If Socialism is to come by constitutional means—that is by the return of a parliamentary majority pledged to the introduction of a Socialist system—its victory will have to be achieved with the aid of a substantial fraction of those who are at present living at economic and social standards substantially above those of the vast majority of the wage-earning classes.

Fortunately, these relatively superior economic groups are far more coherent, intelligent and influential than the groups which it is more difficult to convert. The professionals

and technicians resemble the industrial wage-earners in their capacity for organisation, though they still fall behind them except in the higher ranges of the professions. They are for the most part keenly interested in the work which they are doing, and eager to get an opportunity of doing it well, and not merely to make money out of it, though they are no more immune than the other groups from the desire to make money under the existing system. They can be appealed to on a basis of idealism ; and they can be induced by experience as well as exhortation to revolt against the sheer muddle and waste involved in maintaining the capitalist system. For these reasons, Socialists, if they are setting out to win Socialism by constitutional methods, must clearly endeavour to make a special appeal to the members of these intermediate economic groups ; and, as we have seen, the best appeal they can make is by showing themselves competent to undertake the task of social re-organisation, and confident of their ability to carry through the great change.

Even those who, realising that the class-conscious proletariat has little prospect of winning by itself a numerical majority of the whole population, regard as impracticable the idea of getting Socialism by parliamentary methods, ought, I think, to contemplate carefully the facts set down in this chapter. For these facts, to say the least, make extremely doubtful the outcome of an appeal to force. Nothing is more likely, save in face of the absolute dissolution of the capitalist order, to antagonise the influential middle groups, in British society than the suggestion that the class-conscious proletariat contemplates an appeal to forcible revolution in order to get its way. If capitalist society were actually in dissolution, as Russian society was in 1917, and some degree of force were clearly the one possible alternative to complete chaos, a successful discipline of forceful determination backed by armed power might indeed be the means of

bringing a proletarian victory. But in any situation short of this there is only one condition on which it can possibly be right or expedient for Socialists to contemplate the use of force as a means of achieving Socialism. This one situation is that in which they have themselves come by constitutional means to hold political power, so that the force which they are employing is the force of the State against counter-revolution, and not the force of proletarian revolution directed against the State. I am not prophesying whether or not these conditions will always continue to hold good for Great Britain. I think, however, that it is perfectly clear that they hold good to-day, and will continue to hold good for a substantial time to come, unless a new world war causes a complete breakdown of the capitalist order.

## CHAPTER XIII

### EDUCATION AND CULTURE

A MUCH NEARER APPROACH to real equality of education and culture is among the most important of all Socialist objectives. We have to rid our minds of the notion that a low standard of intellectual or cultural attainment is the natural accompaniment of manual or routine clerical labour. It is as possible for a factory operative or a miner to possess and enjoy the highest culture and education as it is for a highly placed civil servant or professional man. Indeed, many miners and factory workers have amply demonstrated this possibility even under the handicaps imposed upon them by our present class-ridden educational system. We may recognise that in any society cultural standards are likely to be higher on the average among professional workers than in any other section of the people, because men and women of the more definitely intellectual cast of mind will gravitate towards these occupations in considerable numbers. But there is at any rate no reason at all why the manager of a factory should enjoy a higher standard of culture and general education than the manual worker who acts under his orders, or why culture and education should be reserved as a monopoly for those who are to occupy the more responsible positions of economic or political authority.

This view, obvious as it is when you come to think about it, startles many people to-day because hitherto education has commonly been regarded in one or other of two

essentially undemocratic ways. Education of the higher sort, which is not the same thing as culture but is usually a pre-requisite of it, has been looked upon either as a class prerogative or as a necessary form of mainly vocational training for the more responsible kinds of work. It is, indeed, exceedingly difficult to disentangle these two ways of regarding it, for circumstances have caused them to become more and more closely linked together. The "liberal" professions have been for centuries the favourite resort of members of aristocratic families who have needed to go out into the world to earn a living. The better paid posts under the State and in the Church, the law with its *cursus* leading to the judicial bench, have been carefully reserved as far as possible for "gentlemen"; and higher education has in the past played its part largely in preparing gentlemen for offices of these types. To be sure our education has had also to some extent the mission of preparing "non-gentlemen" to do the "gentlemen's" work for them at much lower pay, and this has helped in the past to open the door of preferment to "outsiders." There has been, moreover, side by side with the education for the liberal professions, some attention paid to education for the sake of culture itself. Peers and country gentlemen in the eighteenth century often occupied their leisure in translating Horace or Vergil or contributing to the *Gentleman's Magazine*. The two purposes, that of educating the aristocracy for culture and that of preparing its younger sons and protégés for service in the liberal professions, went on side by side.

As the "new men" began to force their way to the front, with the aid of growing trade activity and the developing factory system, Nonconformity supplemented to an increasing extent the old exclusive schools and universities as a source of education and culture. Many of the outstanding leaders of the rising commercial and industrial

classes got their education at the Dissenting Academies, which became in the latter part of the eighteenth century a good deal better seats of true learning and teaching than the old universities. But this impetus was already dying out in the early nineteenth century ; for the Wesleyans and Methodists, who then took the lead of Nonconformity, had no such passion for reason as the Unitarians and Independents whom they largely displaced. The time was ripe for new sorts of education to fit the new needs of society and the changing class structure which the Industrial Revolution was bringing in its train. Bell and Lancaster, respectively Churchman and Dissenter, provided a part of the answer with their "monitorial system"—a curious form of educational mass-production which was guaranteed to provide exceedingly cheap schooling for the children of the "industrious poor," and thus prepare them for their new functions under the developing capitalist system. Under the "monitorial system" the teacher taught the older children, and the older children passed on what they had learnt to the younger. This resulted in a substitution of learning by rote for real training of the mind ; and it was gradually displaced as the century advanced. But it had for the educational reformers of the early nineteenth century, the supreme merit of cheapness. The Utilitarians would never have been able to persuade the manufacturers to pay for education unless they had been able to offer it on the cheap.

But the schools founded under the influence of Bell and Lancaster provided only half the answer to the educational problem, for the new upper classes as well as the new proletariat needed a new sort of education appropriate to the needs of the time. The so-called "public" schools of the nineteenth century—some of them new foundations and some of them old foundations reformed—set out to supply this want ; and the universities were influenced,

reformed, and reinforced by new foundations on a less exclusive basis and much less under the dominance of the Church. The newer "public" schools set themselves especially to educate the children of the well-to-do for the ever widening range of professional occupations and the superior positions in the world of commerce and finance, and later on of industry as well. Arnold of Rugby was a pioneer of the new educational experiments ; and after the model of the "public" schools the local grammar schools also underwent an extensive overhaul and reclamation. There grew up a wide diversity of schools for various grades of upper- and middle-class boys, and later for girls as well. Eton and Harrow maintained an aristocratic tradition diluted in different degrees with plutocracy. Marlborough, Rugby, and other leading schools provided education mainly for the upper middle classes, especially for budding professionals and Empire-builders in the service of the Crown. St. Paul's, Manchester Grammar School, Dulwich, and many other day schools reached rather further down the social scale, catering chiefly for "day boys" from the homes of the urban middle class. Minor "public" schools arose in great numbers, offering a genteel education on easier terms than the better known foundations. Finally the grammar schools and other "endowed charities," new and old, brought higher education within the reach of the children of small employers and of the more prosperous tradesmen and poorer professionals in the provincial towns.

Not till the twentieth century did the State seriously enter the field of higher education ; but before that most of the middle classes had been fairly effectively reached by the combined efforts of endowed institutions and of private enterprise. Preparatory schools, mostly private ventures, nicely graded as to fees and social appeal, took charge of the earlier education of the comparatively well-to-do. But

in this field there was much greater diversity of standard, especially in those schools which set out to provide higher as well as preparatory education on cheap genteel lines, and succeeded only in retaining a sprinkling of older pupils in schools mainly catering for the younger boys.

While the middle classes were being thus extensively provided for by the growth of "public" and private venture schools of one sort or another, the advance of elementary education for the children of the poor was being terribly retarded by the perennial quarrel between "church" and "chapel." Bell and Lancaster, and the societies which grew up to carry out their ideas, represented rival schools of thought. The National Society stood for the "education of the poor in the principles of the Church of England." The British and Foreign Schools Society of the Lancasterians stood for undenominational education. All through the nineteenth century church and chapel quarrelled endlessly; and whenever it was proposed to extend State grants in aid of education, or to institute any fresh development of schooling under public auspices, the representatives of "church" and "chapel" in the House of Commons promptly tore one another to pieces and very often succeeded in wrecking the project. Not till the 'seventies was elementary education established on a universal and compulsory basis; and even then the quarrel between the two groups was perpetuated in the parallel existence of two types of school, one still controlled by the Church and the other brought more and more under the direct auspices of the local authority. The quarrel was renewed at the beginning of the twentieth century when the State entered the field of higher education; but by 1902 the power of the Church had waned enough to secure that State-provided secondary education should be undenominational.

The outcome of this evolution was an extraordinarily

sharp separation between the education of the workers and the education which was provided for the children of the "superior" classes. From the first the aims of these two kinds of education were fundamentally different. The publicly supported schools which grew out of the pioneer efforts of Bell and Lancaster were meant definitely for educating the poor, and only the poor. The education which they provided was admittedly inferior as well as cheap. It was consciously adjusted to the low social status of those for whom it was meant. Consequently it could not possibly be thought respectable for middle-class parents to let their children attend the publicly supported schools. On the other hand, the so-called "public" schools began definitely as seminaries for the children of the wealthy, and there was no idea of opening them to the children of the poor, however clever some of these children might be. The effect of this sharp disjunction was that the rising lower middle classes, aiming at gentility, refused to send their children to the public elementary schools, but could not afford to send them to the recognised "public" schools. The educational quack, offering the cheap and genteel, found for a long time a happy hunting ground among the would-be respectable, until the reform of the grammar schools began to lessen the scope of his activities. Later he was driven further out of the field by the creation of State-aided secondary schools under municipal auspices in the early years of the twentieth century. But the consequences of his activities as a purveyor of the cheap and genteel have by no means yet completely worn off.

Even to-day, the gulf between the two educational systems remains almost as wide as ever, though bridges have been thrown across here and there from the one to the other. Boys and girls from elementary schools can and do go on in growing numbers to municipal secondary schools and other grant-aided foundations; and a much

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smaller number from the elementary schools is able to proceed later on with the aid of scholarships and maintenance allowances to the universities. But between those who have been educated at the recognised "public" schools and those whose education has been secured chiefly at the State's expense there is still a great gulf fixed. The "two nations" in Great Britain—or at any rate in England, for Scottish education is far more democratic—are not only rich and poor, but in a scarcely less significant sense those who have received an education suitable for "gentlemen" or "ladies" and those who have not. Most significant of all is the fact that it is practically impossible for a boy or girl whose parents come from the "lower classes" to secure entry into any of the great "public" schools. The cost is far too great, and no local authority would dream of, incurring it when there is the alternative of sending the boy or girl to a grant-aided secondary day-school at only a fraction of the expense. I do not mean by this that I should like to see the children of the poor at Eton or Harrow; for the manufacture of a few artificial "gentlemen" out of proletarian materials is no way of promoting class equality. Nevertheless, there is deep significance in the fact that, whereas bridges have been built leading to the universities, there are no bridges at all leading to the upper class "public" schools.

The mention of the difference between English and Scottish education raises an important point. Undoubtedly, the more democratic character of Scottish education and the absence of more than a very few "public" schools of the familiar English type arises mainly from Scotland's religious homogeneity, and from the insistence of the Scottish churches on the need for a widely diffused education of a relatively high standard. Scotland was not torn asunder educationally to anything like the same extent as England by religious controversies; and as a result of this

comparative immunity it was quite possible for well-to-do people in Scotland to send their children to the same schools as the poor, as well as to attend the same places of worship. A section of the Scottish aristocracy did indeed flout this tradition and send its children either to the few Scottish upper-class schools or to the English "public" schools. But in Scotland the shabby-genteel type of middle-class school never made its appearance.

It is true that, even in England, the gentlemen's monopoly of the better-paid salaried and professional posts is gradually breaking down under the impact of State-aided higher education. But secondary education in its present forms does not abolish cultural class distinctions, but rather complicates them and creates new distinctions side by side with the old. This is bound to be the case as long as the entry to secondary schools is open on quite different terms to children whose parents are better or worse off. For, as long as secondary education remains the privilege of a minority of children, whether they owe it to their parents' means or preparedness to make sacrifices for them or to their own ability to gain places through the highly competitive examinations for entrance scholarships and the keen struggle for maintenance allowances, the secondary schools are bound to go on manufacturing class distinctions. They may invade more and more the old monopolies of the gentlemanly classes ; but in doing so, they will create "semi-gentlemen" marked off from the classes which have no claim at all to a share in gentility. They will, moreover, be induced by their desire to be gentlemanly to be excessively "literary," and to devote far too much attention to imitating the educational methods of the "public" schools, and far too little to working out types of education designed to raise the general standard of culture for manual as well as non-manual workers.

A classless society demands a classless education. This has

two aspects—first that the class distinctions between State-aided and other schools should be swept away, and all children go from the first to schools which are chosen for them on grounds which have nothing to do with either gentility or their parents' ability to pay ; and secondly that, when all normal children have been accorded schooling up to the age on which society has settled as the minimum for leaving school, the choice of those who are to proceed to higher forms of education should be made again on grounds which have nothing to do with either "gentlemanliness" or the economic status of the parents. A sound educational system for building up a classless society requires the fusion of the two existing sets of educational institutions into a single and unified system.

Of course this does not mean that all children ought to receive exactly the same education up to the minimum school-leaving age. On the contrary, there is room and need for a great deal of diversity at every stage—for far more diversity than the exigencies of cheapness now permit to the vast majority of children. We want a system that will enable children to find out what really interests them, and then to some extent to specialise according to their varying bents and interests, provided that none of them omits, up to the level of his or her abilities, to master that minimum of common and commonsense knowledge which is essential for mixing equally with other people without being a social nuisance and for getting a fair chance of making the best of the all-round art of living. Too much and too early specialisation is bad, for a classless society will require a high normal level of general culture. But too little opportunity for specialisation is bad too, for different children enjoy and are good at doing different things. We must distinguish between those forms of specialisation which enable children to follow their bents and those which are designed to prepare them for definite trades or vocations.

There has been too much tendency in the past to confuse the opportunity for specialisation with technical training for definite occupations. The two can be quite different ; and they should be quite different, at any rate up to the age upon which society settles as the normal time for leaving school.

The first essential is to raise the general level of culture as far and as fast as possible. The mechanisation of industrial processes, by reducing the time that needs to be spent on purely manual training for most occupations, frees time which can be used for the enlargement of cultural standards. We shall need in the future to educate the main body of the people much less for work and much more for the use and enjoyment of leisure. Mechanisation makes the need for culture greater, for the less time and attention men have to give to learning the sheer business of making a living, the greater becomes their need to know the art of life. Leisure needs education as well as money, if it is to be profitably enjoyed.

I do not at all mean by this that the school should set out to teach people how to use their leisure time, by devising for them special "leisure-time occupations." I can think of nothing more horrible than to be firmly equipped with a "hobby" and instructed to take a pleasure in it for the rest of my life. What I want is the maximum of opportunity for children to get interested in things and to find out what they are interested in. If education gives them a wide and intelligent range of interests they will soon find out for themselves quite sufficient and for the most part satisfactory ways of using their leisure.

I would have, then, all normal children, no matter who their parents are, go at first to the same school handy to their homes, and thereafter I would have them sort themselves out according to their several bents and abilities without any reference to their parents' social and economic status.

I would allow for many kinds of primary schools, leaving teachers wide freedom to experiment with different methods and curricula ; for some licence to crankiness is greatly preferable to an enforced uniformity of routine. I would have all normal children pass out of the primary into a secondary school by about eleven at latest ; and I would have the secondary schools specialise along many different lines, scientific, literary, mechanical and so on, to suit different bents and types of mind. This could be done in either of two ways, and I should like to see freedom to use both methods. One way would be to develop specialist types of schools, while taking precautions to avoid the perversion of their specialisation into mere technical training for particular occupations. The other way is that of the "polytechnic." This involves large schools, offering a wide diversity of courses with plenty of freedom for those attending them to choose and to experiment among different subjects, and to a large extent to determine their own range of study by selecting the subjects in which they are most interested. In the larger centres of population this second method is almost certainly to be preferred. In smaller places it is obviously much less easy to work. But the large-scale trial of both methods would probably soon serve to establish their relative claims.

I want every normal child to go on to a secondary school ; but I do not suggest that they should all pass out of the secondary school into a university, though I do hope to see an institution of university standard and character, at least for part-time or spare-time education, set up in every sizeable town, and opportunities offered for part-time or spare-time, as well as full-time, university education to pupils from country districts as well as from the towns. Short of the university, I shall not be content till education for all goes on right up to eighteen—which should not prevent adolescents who have a clearly defined bent from

being released for certain periods from sixteen onwards in order to gain a first practical view of what work in industry or commerce or some branch of the public service really means.

A "stupid" boy or girl does not need, at any rate up to eighteen, less education than one who is regarded as "clever." The opinion that it is waste of time to educate the "stupid"—who are often not really stupid at all but have tastes and bents differing from those of their instructors—is derived from the idea that the main purpose of education is "vocational," i.e. that it is designed to pick out and train fit persons for the higher posts in society, and to help people to "get on in the world" in a material sense. Doubtless to find and train fit persons for various jobs is one of the uses of education, but its principal use is to help men and women to master the art of good living. The relatively stupid, even where they really are stupid and are not merely thought to be so, need fully as much help in mastering this art as those who are clever. Moreover, if people are not clever, that is no reason why they should be ignorant into the bargain. Ignorance is a social nuisance: it calls for prevention as much as ill health or boorishness of manners or the belief that war is glorious and the foreigner a natural enemy.

How far boys and girls are best educated together or apart I do not pretend to know. There is plenty of room for both systems side by side. But assuredly girls ought to be educated just as well as boys, even if they are not for the most part taught exactly the same things. There is no more room for sex discrimination, which is by no means the same thing as a recognition of sex differences, than for class distinction in a Socialist society.

Whatever differences of practice there may be in the schools, in the universities I am sure the sexes should be taught together. The monasticism of Oxford and

Cambridge is a ridiculous survival, which has no equivalent in the newer universities. If the system of residential colleges on the Oxford and Cambridge model survives at all, let us have mixed colleges. But I very much doubt whether the residential college will survive—though the “hostel” for students from a distance may—except for post-graduate work; and among post-graduate students there is clearly no case at all for keeping the sexes apart as if they were still children incapable of managing their own affairs.

In the educational system which I am here envisaging there will clearly be no room for boarding schools of the existing “public” or preparatory school type. Boarding houses at day schools may exist for children whose parents are abroad or who have to send them to school at a distance; and there may be special reasons for sending some particular boy or girl away from home. But the institution most appropriate to a classless society is the day school from which the children go home at night. I do not, however, want to pull the “public” schools down, or convert them to non-educational uses. I hope that, when we get rid of our privileged classes, the buildings of the existing “public” schools, and some of the big country houses as well, will be turned into country hostels belonging to the day schools, and that children will be sent to these hostels for part of the year in order to give town-bred boys and girls especially a taste of the country, and home-keeping youth a taste of living together under one roof with others of the same age.

Under an educational system of this sort the whole community would soon develop a far closer community of culture than is possible under the existing class system. Of course I do not suggest that everyone would become “cultured,” in a sense in which only a small fraction of the privileged classes is cultured to-day. Culture in a literary sense never is and never will be within everybody’s

capacity or to everybody's taste. It is even now largely a monopoly of the professional classes and of quite a small section of the aristocracy, together with a tiny fraction of the working class which has managed to overcome the social and economic handicaps and has far more community of idea and culture with the professional classes than with any other section of society. But there does exist under capitalist society, throughout a group which is far wider than that of the "cultured" in this narrow sense, a certain basis of common knowledge, common habits of speech and behaviour, and common outlook on the world which is quite compatible with very wide differences in intellectual or æsthetic attainments and interests. When a very stupid person meets a very clever person, or a person whose interests are mainly mechanical or even athletic meets someone whose main interests are in literature or art, they can, if they have been brought up in the same sort of educational environment, talk to each other as equals and without social awkwardness, even if they find little to exchange beyond commonplaces, and feel little or no desire ever to meet each other again. They may be rather bored, for the cross in interests may be too wide for real intercourse ; but they will not be awkward, as they would be if they set out from quite different social backgrounds. In a class-ridden society this ability to escape from awkwardness while mixing on equal terms is bound, save in exceptional individuals who have a power of getting outside their class, to be confined to persons of the same broad social stratum. The affair of Socialism is to diffuse this easiness of intercourse over the whole membership of the community. But this cannot be done without establishing, for all normal people at least, as much common basis of education as now exists among the members of the prosperous and "gentlemanly" classes.

For social as distinct from economic equality has as its

essential foundation a community of culture. Some community of this sort no doubt exists in every society that is permeated at all by a sense of unity ; and a good deal of it is needed to provide a firm foundation for the sense of nationality in any coherent national State. A common language implies to some extent a common way of thinking. For, if thought shapes language, it is for most people a far more important fact that language provides a mould for thought. Community of religion has in the past been so strong a cement of human societies that differences of faith and of religious observance have often been regarded as fatal obstacles to national unity ; and largely on this account the State has aided fanatics in persecuting the heretics. The experience of a common environment in which nature makes like suggestions to the minds of all, and the works wrought by men upon nature create no less compelling forces of suggestion, helps to build up a common state of mind and to make citizens of the community conscious of their likeness one to another and of their differences from those outside.

The simpler a society's institutions and ways of living are, the keener its sense of unity arising out of these natural and material forces is likely to be. With more complicated social habits, such as the advance of civilisation involves, men's experiences become more diverse. Town is separated more sharply from country, so that the force of environment plays differently upon the townsman and the countryman, until in many advanced industrial societies the townsman fares forth into the country almost as a stranger, to drink in strange sights and sounds and country smells that no longer form part of his inbred sense of nationality. He may love the country still ; but he loves it as a stranger, and no longer as one who takes its part in his consciousness for granted.

Similarly, up to a point, the civilising forces in society

create a gulf between men in their use of words and in the basic ideas which words alone can express. Up to a point, as civilisation gains ground on a foundation of economic inequality, there is a growing divergence of vocabulary and ideas between rich and poor. Words increase and multiply ; but the common people as a rule get along with increasingly fewer words than the educated classes. Nor is the number of words used the really important point. The same word means very different things to people who live in different social environments. For what really matters about words is not their dictionary meaning but the content of association which they possess in the minds of those who use them. I can never read the literature of the eighteenth or the early nineteenth centuries without being made aware of the consciousness of growing difference with which the educated classes regarded the poor. Disraeli's *Sybil* is the best expression of this consciousness in nineteenth century literature—and very nearly the last in so extreme a form.

For whereas up to a point cultural differences increase with the advance of civilisation, thereafter the current begins to set the other way. The spread of popular education, low as its standards have been in a cultural sense, has done a great deal to widen not only the vocabulary but also the associative content of words in the minds of the poorer classes. It is no longer true, to anything like the same extent as it was, that rich and poor "talk different languages" ; and that change at any rate is all to the good. But there is still far too much difference of associative content, based on differences of nurture and education, for any real cultural equality to be possible save among exceptional individuals who are able to transcend class limitations. By no means all rich men share in this wealth of cultural association which is the best product of higher education ; and some poor men share in it very greatly

in spite of their poverty. But cultural as well as material enjoyments are still open far more easily to the rich than to the poor, and there is a real and dividing difference of cultural possessions between the general run of the privileged and unprivileged classes.

It is this cultural difference which we must set out to remove. We cannot succeed in removing it without getting rid of the idea that some kinds of work are of their very nature "vulgar" and socially contemptible. In any society some men are bound to be leaders in the various walks of life; for some men have the quality of leadership in them whereas the majority have not. But given a common basis of culture and a reasonable approach to equality in economic condition, differences of ability open no gulfs of social inferiority in the way of the less gifted, and the arrogance of the able is not reinforced by the sense of social superiority and material success. Moreover, though some people are and always will be leaders by nature, the power of leadership is by no means the only form of prowess. Men and women are capable of expressing their personalities in innumerable ways according to their several bents and abilities; and it may be as satisfying to the soul to play a first-class game of tennis or football as to invent a new kind of aeroplane, or to find a cure for a previously incurable disease, or compose immortal poetry or music, or be acclaimed as a born leader of men. Prowess based on the useful arts may be socially the best kind of prowess; but that does not prevent other forms of distinction from being forms of prowess capable of giving satisfaction to the mind, and prestige to their possessor. When there exists a common culture based on a reasonably equal standard of living, the possessors of all these diversified forms of ability will be able to mix together on equal terms; and the number of persons who do possess special ability of one sort or another, and get a chance to demonstrate their special

ability in a satisfying way, will be very large. Moreover, even the people who are not specially good at anything will feel no greater sense of inferiority, if as much, as they feel to-day when they are mixing with those whom present-day society regards as their social equals.

Equality in education, then, as I have defined it in this chapter, is a vital part of social equality and of Socialism. It is essential to the successful functioning of a classless society ; but there can be no greater mistake than to suppose that the reform of education will by itself create the new social order, or that we must wait for the making of a new society on the spread of enlightenment through educational advance. On the contrary, educational inequality is mainly a product of class inequality in the economic field, and cannot be abolished as long as class inequality is suffered to continue in being. For as long as we allow education to be perverted to serve class interests, so long will even our efforts to broaden the basis of higher education result chiefly in raising up a new class of monopolists possessing petty privileges above the general run of men. The progress of education will continue to obstruct equality ; and instead of raising the general cultural standard higher education will persistently turn more and more of the people into snobs.

It is no use waiting for people to become culturally equal, and only then trying to make them equal in an economic and social sense. But, on the other hand, there is every reason for pursuing our campaign for educational equality side by side with the economic and political campaign for Socialism. Something, as we have seen, has already been done, not only towards making class distinctions less rigid, but also towards raising the standards of education among the poorer sections of the community, and in this way narrowing the cultural gulf between rich and poor. Much more can be done along these lines, even within the limitations of

capitalist society ; and educational reformers must diligently pursue this path, keeping always on their guard against the perversion of educational developments to serve the interests of the class system. The perversions against which they must be particularly vigilant are two—the struggle of the privileged classes, in making concessions of higher education, to provide rather a ladder whereby a few can climb up out of one class into another than a highway for a broad advance ; and the struggle of the capitalist interests to turn general education as far as possible into vocational education of a type designed to prepare working-class boys and girls for special trades and occupations, and to equip them with a “ culture ” which will not raise their minds above their destined station.

This second point is of very great importance, because recognition of it is so apt to lead, on the side of the educationists, to an opposite perversion. Determined to stop the conversion of cultural education into a narrowly vocational training, too many educationists regard all forms of schooling that are not purely literary, that is, not purely book-learning, as illegitimate, and in that way exclude forms of exercise of hand and eye which are no less indispensable than book-learning for the building up of a rounded personality. We have to rescue physical and manual education from the disrepute into which they have fallen among progressive educationists ; for, unless we are able to do this, our efforts to promote secondary education for all will result, if they succeed, rather in training more clerks and “ black-coats ” than the economic system can possibly absorb than in creating a higher level of cultural activity and appreciation among all the citizens.

## CHAPTER XIV

### HOW MUCH DO WE WANT SOCIALISM?

AT THE END of this book I come back to the most important question of all. Do we want Socialism? The first answer of course is that some of us do and some of us do not. But that is by no means a sufficient answer. For we have to go on to ask of those who do want Socialism how much and with how much passion and determination they want it, and of those who do not how deep is their opposition and upon what does it rest.

Let us begin with those who do not want Socialism. They include in the first place the great majority of persons who live on incomes derived from the ownership of property, the great majority of heads of businesses from great capitalist firms to small shops and work-shops, the great majority of the more highly placed salary-earners, a large majority of professional people, and the great majority of farmers. They include also at present a majority of the black-coated workers and of those engaged in personal service. In short, the anti-Socialists embrace the great majority of the upper and middle classes, a large fraction of the agricultural population, and a substantial section of the wage-earning groups outside the industrial proletariat.

This opposition, however, is not homogeneous. It consists, first, of a body of rich or well-to-do "superior" persons, the "upper classes," apart from the salaried and professional groups, that is, of those who feel their interests

to be directly bound up with the maintenance of a class system based on the rights of property. To this group belong the comfortably off property-owners, the heads of businesses substantial enough to give their principals a *bourgeois* status, the big farmers, and also those professional men and salaried managers and officials who have enough private or family property to think of themselves as members of the owning class. With this group must also be reckoned a considerable number of quite small property-owners or recipients of unearned incomes who belong to well-to-do or aristocratic families and feel that their interests and sympathies, even if they are relatively poor themselves, definitely ally them with the property-owning grades of society.

Secondly, the opposition includes the conscious hangers-on of this first group. To this second group belong most of the flunkies and domestic servants of the richer classes, most of those who serve in shops driving an upper- or upper-middle-class trade, including shop-keepers as well as wage- and salary-earners in distributive employment, most of the staffs of upper- or middle-class hotels, road houses, boarding houses, places of amusement, banks in residential areas, tourist offices, and a host of other institutions catering chiefly for those who have money to spend, deposit, or invest.

Thirdly, the opposition has at present the support of most of the professional and salaried workers. Most of the upper professionals—lawyers, doctors, parsons, accountants, architects, consulting engineers, schoolmasters in “better-class” schools, bank managers, and the rest—feel themselves to be members of the socially superior grades in society and instinctively align themselves with these grades. In their wake are drawn most of the lesser professionals and salaried workers, who aspire to a superiority of social status and respectability over the manual workers and

shop assistants and small tradesmen, and take colour from the groups above them whose social habits they often imitate to the best of their means.

However, the hold of the opposition on this third group is a good deal more precarious than on either of the other two. There are, in proportion to numbers, far more Socialists among professional men and salary-earners of the higher as well as the lower grades than among property-owners or business men, or even among most sections of the non-industrial proletariat. Given favourable conditions, the salary-earners are capable of effective trade union organisation, as on the railways and in the public service ; and the professionals have mostly a fairly keen sense of vocational solidarity, which sometimes finds expression in a desire to be recognised as a neutral "third party" standing aloof from both the "capitalists" and the "proletariat."

In every one of the groups so far described there is a minority of Socialists, even if it be only a tiny minority. It is possible to discover a Socialist peer or two, apart from the creations of the Labour Governments—who are often in a great hurry to go over to the other side. There are a few Socialist business men, a sprinkling of Socialist tradespeople and Socialist farmers, a rather larger number of Socialist *rentiers* or retired annuitants, a few Socialist domestic servants, and a much larger number of Socialist shop assistants, theatrical employees, and so on. There are some Socialist publicans and barmen, though the "trade" as a whole is a great stronghold of Toryism. But, even if the salary-earning and professional Socialists are added in, there is only a very small Socialist minority among all the groups outside the industrial proletariat. Probably the largest contribution in proportion to total numbers is made by authors, journalists and artists, a biggish section among whom forms a sort of "intellectual proletariat" without much property or much use for *bourgeois* habits and

conventions, and with a far stronger taste for ideas than exists among the educated classes as a whole. Teachers in State-aided schools, and public servants generally, also supply a relatively high contingent of Socialists of the non-proletarian brand.

When we come to the proletariat proper, it is far harder to say how many Socialists there are. For among the proletarians Socialism is far more apt to be a matter of degree. The sympathies of the industrial proletariat are nowadays instinctively Socialist, at any rate throughout the older industrial districts. But whereas an instinctive anti-Socialist can be classed definitely as an anti-Socialist because his instinct ranges him on the side of things as they are, an instinctive Socialist cannot be classed definitely as a Socialist, because Socialism demands an active and conscious effort to change the basis of the social order. Almost any trade union in these days will be prepared to pass a resolution in favour of Socialism by a large majority ; and the great mass of the industrial proletariat can be relied upon to vote Labour even at so extraordinary an election as that of 1931. The wives of the industrial workers are nowadays hardly less instinctively Socialist than their husbands—though I am not so sure of their daughters, outside the older industrial areas. If having a *veleity* towards Socialist proposals means being a Socialist, the industrial proletarian class is to-day overwhelmingly Socialist.

But how Socialist is it ? Clearly the number of those who are prepared to work hard for Socialism is relatively small, even if we allow that nearly all those who work hard for the Labour Party are to be counted as working for Socialism. Of course by this standard there are still fewer anti-Socialists. But, as we have seen, the upholders of the *status quo* and those who set out to change it cannot in this respect be judged by the same standards. It needs far more energy

and determination to change a working system than merely to protect it against change ; for, while it exists and works, all the forces of inertia, as well as the coercive power of the State machine, are ranged on its side. Where a social system which was previously in working order has actually broken down, the position is no longer the same. For then attack and defence are more on a parity, and the balance of favourable opportunity may even pass over to the attacking side, because it seems to offer better hope of escape from chaos. Socialism's easiest chance comes where capitalism has actually collapsed, though even so the chance cannot be seized without courageous leadership. Where there is no collapse, but only depression, the Socialists need to be a good deal keener than the anti-Socialists if they are to stand a chance of success.

By this standard how Socialist is the industrial proletariat of to-day ? It is more Socialist, I think, than at any previous time ; but there are forces at work to relax its Socialism as well as to stiffen it up. Among the stiffening forces are, first, the growing sense of capitalist disease and, arising out of this, the growing difficulty experienced by the trade unions in exacting progressive concessions from the employers ; and secondly the wider diffusion of education, and therewith the growth of educated working-class leadership. Thirdly, proletarian Socialism has been immensely reinforced in recent years by the growth of political consciousness among women of the wage-earning classes, and by the greater political and social freedom open to women in recent years. There is also among the stiffening forces the growing sense of vast technical possibilities running to waste and, not least powerful, the desire for peace and the sense of the hopelessness of securing it in face of capitalist and imperialist rivalries. These are potent forces on the side of Socialism, but against them have to be reckoned the migration of industry from the old strongholds of trade

unionism to areas at present unorganised, the rapid transfer from the ranks of the industrial proletariat to the semi-proletarian groups, and the undoubtedly weakening of the orthodox Socialist appeal in face of the defeat of Social Democracy over a large part of Europe and above all in its old intellectual centre, Germany. Against this last factor has of course to be set the resounding victory of Communism in Russia, which has been an important force in making Socialists, perhaps even more among the middle classes than among the workers. But in the absence of a "revolutionary situation" in Great Britain and in the presence of the essentially "social democratic" policy of the British Labour Party, this factor has served rather to intensify the Socialism of the active few among the proletariat who were already conscious Socialists than to give energy to the instinctive Socialist sympathies of the industrial proletariat as a whole.

The resultant of all these forces is that the main body of the industrial proletariat, a growing minority of the commercial proletariat, a significant fraction of the professional grades, and a small sprinkling of other social groups is now Socialist to the extent of contemplating with favour Socialist measures, and perhaps even complete Socialism at some indefinite time in the future. But the immediate steps towards Socialism naturally look different to different sections of the mass of lukewarm Socialists. To the main body of the proletarian Socialists—we are leaving out for the moment the keen and active minority of thorough Socialists—the immediate advance towards Socialism means primarily the winning of higher wages, shorter hours of labour, better working conditions, and a progressive improvement in the social services. It means mainly material advantages for both the unemployed and the employed, and the holding of office by "benevolent" Governments prepared to tax the rich more heavily in order to help the

poor, and therewith to carry through such measures of "socialisation" as may be necessary in order to achieve these ends. The mass of lukewarm Socialists has no clear view of what the required measures are—though it may have of some particular measure directly touching its own fortunes. It leaves the general planning of the Socialist programme to be disputed about among the active minority. It wants the results, and does not care greatly by what means they are to be obtained.

On the other hand, the general run of non-proletarian Socialists—again leaving out the active minority, which is proportionately a good deal larger in this group—do not stand to make material gains for themselves. They are Socialists from idealistic or rationalistic motives. They want to help the poor, and want a nearer approach to social and economic equality, or they hate muddle and waste; or they are moved by both these motives at the same time. It makes a substantial difference from which of these two points of view the main approach to Socialism is made. The "idealists" in the mass are mainly the successors of the old Radicals and social reformers, whereas the "rationalists" are drawn more largely from the professional and technical grades, who are more conscious of the wasted opportunities presented by the advance of science. Of the "idealists" a great many are ready to rest satisfied if only they can feel that some progress is being made, even if it be but slow, and that the social order is not positively moving further away from social justice. They are prepared to stand for greater justice at some sacrifice to themselves if need be; but it does not follow that they are willing to contemplate unlimited sacrifice or immediately to forgo their position of relative privilege. They have an instinct in favour of social justice; but they have also a strong instinct against revolution, and even against "going too fast" on constitutional lines. They

include a large body of ex-Liberals who have turned Socialist after a fashion, rather because they have despaired of Liberalism than because of any real and lively faith in Socialism.

This ex-Liberal contingent is of course gradually dying out. But it is likely to find successors of much the same temper. For it is easier to be philanthropic of mind than to perform the imaginative somersault of contemplating a new way of living. Hardly any middle-class Socialists, except a few persons of one idea, can be immune from some feeling of reluctance to be shaken out of their ruts by the sudden advent of Socialism. It is easier to contemplate loss of privilege in itself than the change of habits which it connotes. The convinced non-proletarian Socialist overcomes this reluctance without wholly expelling it : the less convinced compromises on "gradualism," and tells himself that it would be dangerous to the Socialist cause to attempt to introduce Socialism save by very gradual stages.

Verging upon these mild Socialists are a large number of well-meaning people who are not at all sure whether they are Socialists or not. They are conscious of social injustices calling for remedy ; but they are uncertain whether Socialism is the remedy. Internationally they love peace and regard the world's war-making postures with disapproval and dismay. They support the League of Nations and the League of Nations Union, and they are inclined to argue for social as well as international peace. They would wish men to resolve their social antagonisms, by loving one another better in spite of the considerations which divide them ; and they would wish to believe that progress can be achieved by consent, or at all events that the persuasive efforts of the people of good will can achieve so much success as to reduce the people of ill will to a helpless minority.

Of these "progressive" persons a few would call themselves political Conservatives. Many would call themselves Liberals. And nowadays a good many would regard themselves as Socialists. But a good many more would repudiate any party label. Whatever their political affiliations may be, they have in common less a body of doctrine than a sense of discomfort with things as they are. They are conscience-stricken at their own comparative good fortune and at the ill fortune of the poor. They want to do something to even out the chances, and in doing so to recover their own peace of mind. Nor is this at all a despicable condition to be in. It is easy to see how much is wrong, and quite hard to discover how best it can be put right; and it is difficult to face that leap into the unknown which is involved in a real recognition of the equality of the poor with the rich. It is much easier to be a "philanthropist" than a "comrade"; and for most middle-class people there is something a little ridiculous in being a "comrade."

*Nil habet infelix paupertas durius in se  
Quam quod ridiculos homines facit . . .*

Socialism is like poverty in that it is apt to make its *bourgeois* votaries seem rather ridiculous to their families and to most of their friends, and therewith sometimes feel rather ridiculous themselves.

The "well-meaning" people in effect form a sort of buffer group between Socialists and anti-Socialists. But to the extent to which they come over to the Socialist side they necessarily reinforce the gradualist faction. They cannot bear the idea of "class war" or of resolving social antagonisms by force. They want everybody except a few incorrigible diehards on both sides to kiss and be friends, and to advance towards Socialism by a consent based on recognising the claims of social justice. They are disposed

to reprove the poor for being in too much of a hurry, and to set great store by the hope of converting the rich to a sense of the vanity of riches. Having an ethical habit of mind themselves, they want society as a whole to behave in an ethical way. And they do not want social justice to be brought in by force save to a minimal extent, because they think that the use of force to accomplish justice will end in perverting justice itself. They are Kantians who regard the motive as more important than the action.

There are indeed among the semi-Socialists of the middle classes others who flit wildly here and there like birds in a gilded cage in search of some outlet from the indignities and immoralities of present-day society. They are aware of wrongs to be righted ; but, lacking clear vision or a readiness to face unpleasant facts, they lay hold desperately of this or that patent panacea for all social evils. When I was young they were apt to be either single taxers or advocates of women's rights ; but nowadays they mostly fasten on the currency rather than the land system as the root of all evil. Some of them still fasten instead on "the drink," or on gambling, or on religious superstition or the lack of it, or on the absence of birth control, or on anything else that happens to take their fancy or be brought home to them by some personal experience of their own. Whatever it be, to this one thing all human ills are thenceforth attributed. "Free credit" or "free land," or birth control, or prohibition, or the rationalistic expulsion of God from the universe, or the unquestioning acceptance of the divine guidance, or the suppression of betting—whatever it be, this one thing will suffice to set the crooked straight, and to put the feet of mankind firmly on the road to Utopia. Some of these one-ideaed apostles find their way into the Socialist ranks ; but more of them hover doubtfully on the verge of Socialism, appealing to Socialists and to the Labour Party to put their patent remedy in the forefront of the

Socialist programme. Some, again, are determined anti-Socialists, and denounce Socialism as a gross gospel of materialism, doomed to failure through its ignorance of man's higher nature.

The "rationalists" in the ranks of Socialism are as yet far less numerous than the "idealists." In fact the purely rationalistic Socialist without ethical impulses behind his rationalism probably does not exist at all. For before a man can feel the impulsion to become a Socialist he must hate poverty and unhappiness and want to make the common run of people better off. Having these motives present more or less strongly in his mind, he can cast his conclusions in favour of Socialism into a mould of rationality and spend more energy on denouncing the waste and inefficiency of capitalism than its flagrant injustice. But the case for maximum production really assumes the case for raising the general standard of living. For how, unless this is done, are the increasing supplies of goods and services to find consumers? Rationalistic Socialism—the Socialism of the "economic planners" and the disgruntled technical engineers—is rather a rationalistic way of expressing an ethical objective than a separate and independent gospel. Why bother to produce more wealth unless it is to be devoted to the use of men? Why bother even then except in the assurance that more wealth will produce more human happiness? There is, in the last resort, no case for higher production except the ethical case that it can be used to make the mass of men happier and better off.

Working-class people are in general far less prone to system-making or to the setting up of panaceas than the socially uncomfortable or conscience-stricken members of the more highly educated classes. But the securer sections among the working classes are by no means immune from the taste for gradualism. Whatever may be the situation of the chronically unemployed miner in South Wales or

Durham, or the displaced shipyard worker or cotton operative, most of the upper strata of the modern working class have something to lose beside their chains. They are not the "starvelings" whom the Socialist anthem, the *Internationale*, bids rise from their slumbers, but respectable self-respecting craftsmen with some contempt for the failings of the less skilled and more feckless mass beneath them. They may be Socialists, but they also want to be sure that Socialism will "work"; and they have no desire for Socialism to be introduced any faster than it can be made to work with reasonable efficiency. They too have their ruts which they are ready to leave for a Socialism of assured competence. But they have not the fervour of revolutionaries who either have nothing to forfeit by failure, or have so identified themselves in imagination with the cause of Socialism as not to count costs.

All this goes to show that there is at present a very powerful current of British Socialism setting towards an evolutionary policy. Such a policy can count far most heads in its support, and under a parliamentary system counting of heads is a matter of primary importance. I think we can take it as certain that British Socialism will be for some time to come as evolutionary in action as it dares to be—that is to say, as evolutionary as it finds compatible with its will to advance some distance in the direction of Socialism. It will go no faster than it must go in order to advance at all, and not to forfeit the backing of the more eager minority that is calling upon it to mend its pace.

In face of this distribution of social forces, the progress towards Socialism in Great Britain would, I think, be necessarily very slow if British capitalism were to remain even in its present state of questionable health. Not enough of the privileged would turn against the system of privilege, and not enough of the poor would fervently want Socialism, to make its achievement possible if capitalism

were able to assure material progress at a rate at all corresponding to that which was actually achieved during the Victorian era, or even perhaps to prevent a positive regression. But as capitalism becomes more and more of a fetter upon the diffusion of plenty, the prospects change. The lower ranks among the privileged sections of society grow increasingly conscious of the widening disparity between their actual fortunes and the potential plenty of living for all, even upon a footing of much greater equality ; and the proletariat, commercial and agricultural as well as industrial, finds increasing obstacles put in the way of its success in raising the standard of life by the traditional methods of sectional trade union bargaining. The immediate effect of these changing conditions is not, as we have seen, to drive the main mass of the intermediate classes towards Socialism—for many of them are more likely, at any rate at first, to react in the opposite way—but rather to convince a growing fraction in every class of the futility of capitalism and class privilege, and in that way to increase the number of active Socialists among the manual workers and at the same time reinforce them with an increasing band of recruits from other classes.

For the ideal of equality is, after all, an appealing ideal even more in a social than in a narrowly economic sense. It is a satisfying idea to have neither superiors nor inferiors in social status, but to live together on a footing of common fellowship. That is to say, it is a compelling idea if the thing can be done without too great a sacrifice ; for most people will not give up what they regard as the conditions of the good life for themselves for the sake of an ideal. Only as they become convinced that they need give up nothing which is really essential to happiness, and that they stand personally as well as collectively to gain more happiness than they give up by putting society back upon a foundation of security and progressive development, will Socialism

come to attract more than a small fraction of the intermediate classes, or to command the enthusiasm and determined will of more than a small fraction among the wage-earners themselves. But is this so hard a thing to convince men of, if it can be presented to them while they are still young enough to receive vivid impressions and not to have become set in the "old ways"? I think it is not so hard. I believe most young people have no avid desire to be rich, but only above privation; and I am sure that most of them value highly the sense of good fellowship with and fair dealing towards their neighbours. To-day for the first time in the world's history good fellowship and fair dealing are plainly consistent with reasonable plenty for all, at any rate in so economically advanced a country as Great Britain. It is bound to take time to translate this possibility into concrete realisation, even in this country—and, of course, much longer to achieve it for the world as a whole. But now as never before Socialists have on their side the assurance that the thing can be done. They need no longer argue whether it can be done, but only that it should be done, and that Socialism is the only means of bringing it to pass.

Broadly, then, my conclusions are that, under present conditions, the advance towards Socialism in Great Britain is bound to be slow and hesitant. Socialistic measures will be brought in piecemeal; and very likely some of them will be the work of anti-Socialist Governments. For anti-Socialists may resort to at least semi-Socialistic measures for either of two reasons—in an attempt to bid against their political opponents for electoral support, or in order to buttress up capitalism by reinforcing it with "State Socialism" at its weakest points. Just as the Tories abolished the Corn Laws in 1846 and enfranchised the urban artisans in 1867, so anti-Socialist Governments in our own day have granted widows' pensions, set up the Central Electricity

Board and the London Passenger Transport Board, and passed a number of other measures which their supporters would have denounced as socialistic if the Labour Party had been responsible for them.

I am not suggesting that semi-socialistic measures of this order bring Great Britain appreciably nearer Socialism. They do not. But the same can be said of the slightly more socialistic measures which a moderate Labour Government might be expected to enact in its first years of office. What I am suggesting is that there exists at present no sufficient will to go beyond mildly socialistic measures, designed to introduce some elements of Socialism into the economic system without altering, for the present, its predominantly capitalistic character.

I feel sure that, if the Labour Party were to come to power in the near future, it would not, and in practice could not, advance beyond this point during its first period of authority. For a further advance one of three things would be needed—a collapse of British capitalism going far beyond the mere financial crisis of 1931, so as positively to threaten the means of living of a large part of the people, or a dislocation of the world system by war, on such a scale as to upset the stability of the British political régime, or thirdly a plain practical demonstration that the attempt at a gradualist advance towards Socialism had resulted in stalemate, and that no further progress could be looked for along that road. The first and second of these developments would lead on to a revolutionary situation through the collapse of the existing régime, and might thus offer to Socialists an opportunity comparable with that which Lenin and his collaborators were prompt to seize in 1917—though it does not at all follow that the opportunity would be seized with equal promptitude and success. The third development would force the Socialists either to renounce their hopes and give up appealing with promises for the

support of the people, or to launch out on a real attempt to establish Socialism by measures incompatible with the continued working of the capitalist economic machine. It would thus, even if Socialist policy remained constitutional in form, threaten to provoke counter-revolutionary resistance, and thus to lead to a revolutionary situation not unlike that which might arise out of economic collapse or dislocation by war.

But, clearly, no one of these three possible situations has arisen yet, or can be positively predicted as certain to arise in the very near future. Some Socialists, no doubt, feel able to predict confidently the early collapse of the capitalist system, and others are almost ready to tell us the precise date of the next world war. But I, at any rate, cannot follow them in their assurance. World war is probable, but it is not inevitable during the next few years, or even at all; and as for the impending collapse of capitalism, I think it can survive a long while yet, if only it can contrive to avoid a world war. It will become, I believe, more inefficient and more restrictive; and it will decay. But decay and collapse are very different things.

Nor, even in the absence of world war, can I assign even an approximate date for the coming of my third condition of affairs. I do not believe that the road to Socialism can be trodden all the way by "gradualism," or that so great a change in men's social habits and in the structure of society can be made within the limits of the British Constitution. I believe the Socialist movement will have at some stage to assume a revolutionary form, if it is to succeed in introducing Socialism. But this opinion does not involve the view that nothing can be achieved by constitutional action, or that no progress can be made towards Socialism except by revolutionary methods. On the contrary, under the existing conditions in Great Britain, I believe much that is well worth doing can be done in an evolutionary way, and that,

in the present temper of the British people, there is no other way of doing it. At some stage, it will become plainly impossible to advance further towards Socialism without dislocating entirely the capitalist machine ; and as soon as that point is reached the evolutionary policy will have plainly served its turn. That point may come sooner than most people expect ; but we have not reached it yet. It is, moreover, plainly to our advantage, and to mankind's, that it should come as late as possible ; for, the more socialistic institutions we have already in working order when the breaking-point is reached, the less difficult the work of constructing Socialism will be, and the less sufferings will it involve in the course of the transition. The longer we can defer the break, provided that in the meantime we are making real advances in the direction of Socialism, the better are our hopes of making a new world without an intervening period of mass-starvation and destructive internecine conflict.

But, in this book, my main concern has been not with the policy or strategy of Socialism, but with its appeal. We cannot have Socialism without a sufficiency of real and determined Socialists to make it work. The creation of this indispensable body of Socialist opinion, chiefly among the proletariat, but also in other classes, is partly a matter of the evolution of economic forces—of the further decay of capitalism, and the sharper pointing of the contrast between capitalist restriction and potential plenty. But it is also a matter under the control of those of us who are Socialists ; for our power to convince others, and so to create the required body of Socialist opinion, depends on the appearance we present to the rest of the world. If we look competent, courageous and sincere, we shall bring recruits over to our side much faster, and hold them with much more assurance, than if we seem uncertain both of our policy and of our will and ability to carry it into effect. We cannot

afford either to "dither" or to make rhetoric and denunciation substitutes for constructive thought and organised determination. Until we have made enough Socialists whose collective possession of these qualities can be plainly seen, we may whistle for Socialism ; and, even if the situation should arise in which full Socialism has become an immediate economic and political possibility, we shall miss our opportunity as the Italians and Germans missed theirs, and perhaps go down to a no less disastrous and ignominious defeat.

But why should we ? Socialists are waiting to be made, if we will but take the chance of making them. The case for Socialism grows plainer every day, until, apart from the sheer claims of vested interest, there is nothing against it, except . . . Except what ? Except the Socialists, who so often fail to look as if they believed in it themselves. We shall not get Socialism merely by wishing for it, however favourable to its advent the material conditions may be. We shall get it only by wanting it enough, and persuading enough people to want it enough, to work hard and think hard for it—to plan, and agitate, and organise for it, in the particular environment in which our lives are set. Even so, Socialism will not come easily ; for the establishment of a new social order is bound to be a difficult task. But, unless we Socialists are and look competent and courageous and sincere, how can we expect other people to feel confidence in our cause ? The prospects of Socialism depend on the development of the economic situation, no doubt ; but they depend also on the personal quality of its advocates.

